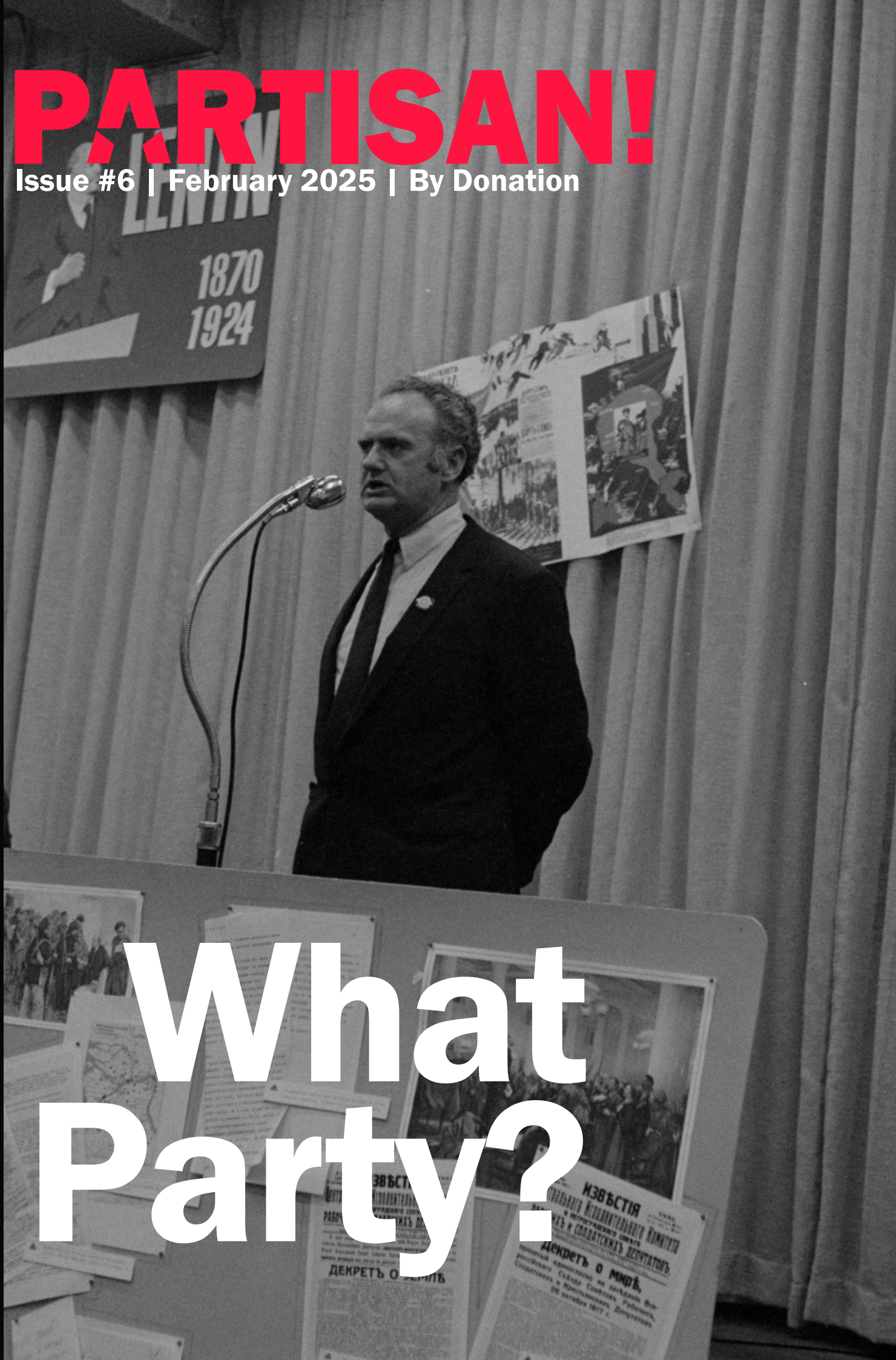
PARTISAN!

Issue #6 | February 2025 | By Donation



What Party?

In this issue:

Open Letter to Red Ant Collective
RCO-CC **Page 4**

Communists must transform the unions, not split them.
Martin Greenfield **Page 5**

VS withdrawal from Calwell: A tactical retreat, or a symptom of bad strategy?
Anthony Furia **Page 9**

The Problem with Vanguards
Andreas Chari **Page 11**

How to Build a Party
Mila Volkova **Page 15**

What happened to Red Ant?
Anthony Furia **Page 21**

For Aboriginal Sovereignty
Gary Foley **Page 24**

The Socialist Left needs unity
Alyssa Duane **Page 27**

Just Stop Oil activist released
Anonymous **Page 30**

Communist unity talks in UK promising
Ruben Sol **Page 31**

Letters
Various **Page 35**

Submissions

Partisan accepts and encourages unsolicited submissions from left-wing radicals and militants of all backgrounds. Articles can range from 800-1,000 words, and essays are limited to 2,000 words. Word count is less restrictive for other submissions including letters and reports, but we would encourage you to keep them concise.

Please include name/pseudonymany other relevant information. Send to publishing email (see: right).

Visit website for more info.

Cover: Laurie Aarons gives a speech at a 1970 CPA conference.
Back: Laurie Carmichael.

Staff:

Max J
Mila Volkova
Luca Fraillon
Jason Brenner
Edith Fischer
V.

Contributors:

Martin Greenfield
Anthony Furia
Max J
Alyssa Duane
Mila Volkova
Francis Q
Sylvia Ruhl
Ruben Sol

About Partisan:

Partisan is the official publication of the Revolutionary Communist Organisation (RCO). We are a monthly journal of the 'partyist left' in Australia – that section of the left which views the formation of a mass Workers Party as its primary task. Alongside the RCO, we fight for a reunification of the left into a party that can carry out the tasks of the communist and workers movement: the establishment of a democratic republic and the dissolution of the capitalist prison-states.

Contacts:

Publishing:
partisanmagazine@proton.me

RCO:
revcomorg@protonmail.com

Website:
partisanmagazine.org

Instagram: @partisanmagazine

Twitter/X: @PartisanRCO

What Party? A Communist Party, we'd hope

Partisan Editors

What kind of party for the Left? We at Partisan and in the RCO ask ourselves this ad nauseum. In this issue, we go over issues the left has with party-building, and an excellent article by Mila Volkova explains the RCO's strategy toward the issue. Included also are excellent reprints: firstly, *Marxism vs. Neo-Anarchist Terrorism* by George Novack, and *For Aboriginal Soveriegnty* by Gary Foley. Novack's 1970 article is a Marxist masterpiece, skilfully rebuking arguments in favour of terrorism and ultra-leftism, though Novack's Trotskyism seeps through, which might be insufferable to some. Foley's 1988 speech, important because he declares that "the only sort of Australia" he can imagine Indigenous peoples living harmoniously within and alongside is a Socialist Republic that where "racism, sexism and exploitation have been eliminated". But before that, he tears into the Left of his time, asking, "What the hell are you mob doing?"

What are we doing? Not a lot, if you bounce between the social media accounts of different socialist sects. Maybe they showed at Invasion Day rallies on January 26th (many of the RCO's members did, and this issue includes a flyer that was circulated by comrades), maybe they posted infographics, maybe they bravely declared from their keyboards that "the colony will fall". But ultimately, as Alyssa Duane argues in her piece, we focus too much on posturing and 'storm chasing' activism. We at Partisan and in the RCO repeat til the cows come home that the communist movement needs to be united into a single party with a Marxist program. This is why we call ourselves 'Partyists' – since we support a single, united, Communist party. We aren't coalitionists, so we don't think the communist movement should exist as a broad coalition of everyone's own separate sect(s).

Only by moving out of the sect form can communists win any real political legitimacy in this country (or anywhere, really). And only by regrouping the communist movement, by engaging with the mass movements and militants, can we come together to collective grow out of permanent sect-ism. Arguing for a Partyist program is a bit tough, since most of the Left are only ostensibly interested in a party. In the worst cases (see: the Communist Party(ies?) of Australia), they already consider themselves the legitimate party of the movement. These are myths and misconceptions that can only be done away with through serious political struggle.

Communists should be where the class is, more or less. This is why communists argue not only for engaging in workplaces to organise workers directly there, but also to engage with workers wherever they are radicalised and politicised: at rallies, in public and political life, in classrooms, on the street, so on. We have to engage with all unions, not just special left-ish ones. Lenin argues succinctly in *Left-Wing Communism* that communists must not shy away from organising within reactionary unions, or split the union movement to form their own special 'red unions'. This simply leaves the working class at the mercy of reactionary and bureaucratic trade union officials. Martin Greenfield's article, which appears first in this issue, makes a similar argument.

However, we cannot focus all our effort on engaging with workers in the workplace. Such a limited, workerist perspective belies an elitist fetish for 'the ideal working class' – more often than not, it is an imagined, special kind of worker that is placed above others. So this means we should engage with all workers in all industries, not just 'blue collar' workers, like nurses, teachers, fast food workers, retail workers, so on. We aim to build a mass party of the working class, armed with a Marxist program. This means we must engage with the working class as a whole, not just specific sections of it that we value above others. But it also means we have to engage with the rest of the left. We cannot simply "go straight to the masses", such is the strategy of militant sectarians. This is the strategy of serious communists and party-builders.

Workers will not be won over by ultraleft verbiage, empty platitudes or high-horse sloganeering. When they see a divided and politically unserious communist movement, they are not won over to communist politics or to a communist program. This is why we must unite the movement and build the party – without that, nothing else really matters. As much as we want to pretend that we can win workers over en masse through the merits of our individual groups, we are representatives of a broad movement, not our own separate entities. So the acts of one reflect on the acts of all, whether we like it or not.

We apologise for the lack of a January issue, and hope the high quality of this issue makes up for it.

Statement on anti-semitic attacks

RCO Central Committee

The Revolutionary Communist Organisation condemns the recent terrorist attacks on the Jewish community in Melbourne and Sydney. Regardless of who was responsible, these are acts intended to induce a chilling effect on all Jews in Australia. This is simple racial violence and it must be opposed wherever it appears.

These acts did not come out of nowhere; anti-semitism is ubiquitous in capitalist society. It is not confined to fringe far-right groups, nor is it unique to specific religions, ethnicities, or societies.

[Aftermath of the December 9th firebombing of a Synagogue in Melbourne, Victoria.]

Anti-semitism has a more than two-thousand year history as a pillar of Western worldviews, through antiquity, feudalism, and now, capitalism. It did not cease to exist when the Holocaust ended. Zionism itself is a development of earlier forms of antisemitism, with its central tenet being that antisemitism is an immutable characteristic of non-Jews. The conclusion from this is that combating antisemitism is a futile task, hence the supposed need for a Jewish homeland to protect Jews. Zionism's unimpeachable status in the West today only proves the point that antisemitism continues to be an integral part of Australian society.

Outright antisemitism has intensified in recent years partly due to the conservative counterrevolution, as well as due to Israel's genocide in Gaza. Unfortunately, there is a prominent element of antisemitism in the Palestine solidarity movement.

These elements conflate the State of Israel with all of Jewry, and play on old, tired tropes of the Jewish people. Endorsing an antisemitic worldview is antithetical to any espoused goals of ending the occupation, and only serves to drive working-class Jews into the arms of Zionism. This negates their ability to join the global working class struggle. Workers of all religious and ethnic backgrounds have a common interest in overturning imperialism, they must therefore unite and fight!

We dually condemn the Australian state's efforts to expand its own power and surveillance in response to these attacks; regardless of its excuses of "defending the community", and combating antisemitism. These powers are tools used to suppress the working class, and we oppose all attempts by the capitalist state to further arm itself. Any defence of workers and especially those that are racially exploited by the bourgeois state is only ever conditional and temporary.

Unconditional defence of workers cannot exist without the party of the working class, the Communist Party. The party is the organised vanguard that provides leadership and long-term political education in the class struggle. Its political life rejuvenates working class politics and social life, as it connects all sections of the class. Workers' self-defence is one aspect of this rejuvenation, and is needed for us to protect each other, places of worship, and community centres. This is how we can confront racial violence wherever it appears.

The party does not yet exist as the socialist movement is split into a myriad of various sects. The main task of socialists in Australia at this moment must be to re-found a unified Communist Party. In the meantime, however, we can still take the first steps towards eliminating Jew-hatred, and that is through confronting antisemitism wherever it appears, be that in society at-large, or in our own movements.

Open Letter to Red Ant Collective

RCO Central Committee

Dear comrades in Red Ant,

Following the split of your organisation, we would like to express our condolences. Such news is always disappointing. With every split in the movement, we become even weaker. As long as we are competing with one another, we are even less than the sum of our parts.

But we are not surprised by these events. This is the inevitable result of the narrow "sect" form of socialist organising, wherein an organisation founds itself on strict adherence to a certain set of theoretical principles, rather than a practical political program. Red Ant is such an organisation.

Red Ant did not start with an open-minded attitude to internal factionalism. Yet, the formation of factions and theoretical tendencies is inevitable. New members have a wide variety of experiences, varying levels of political maturity, and unique quirks which will inform a wide variety of opinions, even if they agree with the core principles of an organisation. An organisation cannot maintain an eternally cohesive internal theoretical identity against this trend, and it should not try to. Indeed, there is always at least one tendency within an organisation – the leadership – and the development of others is inevitable. Accepting this, what matters is whether tendencies are open and founded on principled political differences, or whether they are undeclared and cliquish. By frowning on the former, Red Ant's internal factions took the latter form.

The results are obvious. The politics of the split in Red Ant are unclear. Is the split even informed by political differences? Such secrecy does no one any favours. Political disagreement should be conducted in the open, not hidden away in conferences closed to the public. To do otherwise makes us look insular, which is unappealing to potentially sympathetic workers.

It also seems that the split was conducted completely undemocratically, which is an inevitable result of an organisation without factional freedom and internal democracy. If factions cannot fight one another in the open, they will do it behind closed doors, and cause havoc on their way out.

There is also a lack of principled politics about this split. Again, where open political discussion and agitation are sidelined in favour of theoretical dogma it's opportunism, interpersonal charisma, and a kind of theocratic interpreting of the "sacred texts" that takes charge instead.

The degeneration of Red Ant was accelerated by its lack of internal structure. Unclear internal rules, a lack of internal political education, no expectations of activity on members, and an unhealthy internal culture meant that Red Ant struggled to survive its first influx of new members. But fixing these problems would not have solved the core problem, which is the sect form.

None of this is unusual. In fact, it is typical of Australian socialist politics.

The Revolutionary Communists believe that we can overcome these problems, but only if we abandon the sect. The entire socialist workers movement must come together and re-found a Communist Party in Australia. This party must be founded on unity around a common program, not a theoretical dogma. The qualification for membership must be acceptance of this democratically constructed program, not agreement with it. There must be freedom of factions and criticism, but unity of action.

As such, we call on the remaining members of Red Ant to dissolve themselves, accept our draft program for a future Communist Party in Australia, and join the Revolutionary Communist Organisation as an internal faction.

In Red Ant's current state, divided, disorganised, thin on resources, your organisation can achieve little. But together, we can begin to build a movement that matters.

We look forward to hearing back from you. Who knows, maybe we'll see you fighting for your programmatic views at our 2025 General Conference.

In solidarity,

Central Committee of the Revolutionary Communist Organisation

Communists must transform the unions, not split them.

Martin Greenfield

In December, nine Australian unions held a summit in Canberra, ostensibly to discuss trade union democracy and the need for working class militancy. It was not a mass meeting and was attended by select delegates by invitation only - not an auspicious sign.

The Trade Unions for Democracy Summit was called in response to the enforced administration of the CFMEU construction division by the Albanese Labor Government, with the support of the ACTU, the peak union body. Supposedly to remove the criminal elements within the NSW and Victorian leaderships of the union, but also to dampen the militancy still within the ranks of the union.

For nearly a decade, the ACTU and the managerial class in the unions initially denied there was a problem in the CFMEU, or turned a blind eye, saying it could be handled internally. And when it finally recognised there was criminality, rather than turn to the membership and the broader working-class movement, it turned to the blunt and hostile tool of the capitalist state to try to cut the head off the snake.

This approach has not and cannot provide a solution. But neither can splitting the union movement, especially when this is not the act of a resurgent militant rank-and-file, but due to schisms within the bureaucracy itself. We must outline a strategy of transformation for the unions as part of the reemergence of a communist party and militant leadership for the working class.

While the ALP government – and the ACTU in support – has crossed a class line by using state power to send the lawyers and hacks in to run a union, those organising the December summit act as if there are no issues of democracy and corruption in the CFMEU itself, which has been infiltrated by organised crime in at least two states.

Communists oppose state interference in unions, but we also oppose connivance with criminals, itself a form of class collaboration.

The encroachment of criminal elements into the CFMEU had led to the severe curbing of union democracy in parts of the union: the effective suspension of delegate election on most jobs; the imposition of 'enforcers' for the leadership on sites; the nepotistic appointment of officials with no building industry experience. All of this points to a union that has gone off the rails of democracy.

Organisers of the summit and other supporters of the disgraced CFMEU leadership in exile cry bourgeois 'natural justice'. But communists and other working-class militants must hold our union leaders to a higher standard than that.

Even if we ignored the assistance given to drug-dealing and money-laundering crooks, the fact that union secretaries have their own children appointed to union leadership positions is enough to move them on. But only the membership, supported by working-class militants and democrats, can force out both the administrators and the criminal elements.

For the ACTU, they see no way but to rely on the state and its courts to clear out corruption and criminality. This is a result of how low the unions have fallen, corporatised in the 1980s through the Accord process and completely disarmed by the Fair Work Act. Union officials are in many cases Laborite careerists, not rank-and-file activists elected and employed to do the job.

It is no wonder the union membership has slumped to record lows in the private sector. Neither the ACTU connivance with the Albanese government, nor the syndicalists who want us to 'turn a blind eye' to criminality offer a way forward. CFMEU members need their union back – from the lawyers, from the crooks.

DEMOCRACY: sounds like a good idea

The 'Union Democracy' summit on 9 December follows a decision in September by the CEPU unions, the largest of which is the ETU electrical trades union, to disaffiliate from the ACTU, Australia's peak union body. It is worth noting the CEPU did not disaffiliate from the Australian Labor Party.

If this move was a genuine call for a mass

[Union leadership hosts the Unions for Democracy summit. Photo: AMWU Victoria FB]

militant campaign for democracy across the entire labour movement it could be worth supporting. But it is no such thing. It is a schism within laborism and the union bureaucracy, not a break from it.

And even if it were a radical and socialist movement to establish a separate peak union body from the ACTU, this would also be a mistake. Communists do not want to carve off 'perfectly formed' unions but look to organise and transform the working class and its organisations – united – against the capitalist class and its state.

Unity is strength, disunity is death. The fact that so many leftists are cheering on this schism displays their bankrupt syndicalist politics – and it reveals their complete isolation from the working class itself, their enthusiasm displaying a vicarious proletarian role-playing instead.

Leading up to the December summit, it was reported that 'everything is on the table'. A media release in October from the Building Industry Group of unions said the meeting would consider "the creation of an alternate democratic union body to advocate on behalf of all workers", "future political funding, including supporting union political candidates" and "a campaign to restore union democracy".

It said this was based "on a broad groundswell of support" to establish such a body. However, the initial support shown to CFMEU rallies immediately after administration has dwindled. For these 'left' bureaucrats, all now hangs on the outcome of the unlikely High Court challenge to the administration (and the fate of former CFMEU NSW secretary Darren Greenfield – no relation - who, with his son, face bribery charges).

So much for reliance on the rank-and-file. While the 'Trade Union Democracy' summit talked a big game, the meeting was a fizzer. Eighty hand-picked senior officials and delegates issued a statement after the meeting highlighting four 'achievements':

- Formation of a Unions for Democracy organising committee
- Endorsement of annual summits. The next planned for early this year
- Condemnation of the CFMEU forced administration
- A democracy charter 'outlining shared values of democracy, growing the union movement while addressing challenges in industrial relations laws.

Of course, union democracy would an excellent idea. But this body has shown it is not interested in unleashing the democratic power of the membership. Hand-picked delegates, a closed session, no invitation for rank-and-file unionists to engage.

[Union leaders attend the Unions for Democracy summit. Photo: ETU on Twitter/X]

The make-up of the organising committee was not announced, nor the union democracy charter published anywhere. In none of the official statements from the summit, was there any declaration of the need to break the Fair Work Act. No nod to the need for mass political action to resist the attacks on working-class living standards and address the housing crisis.

There was nothing about removing the chauvinistic hyper-masculine thuggish culture that seems to have blossomed under Setka and his crew. And nothing about the democratic-republican principles of electing all officials, for officials to take no more than a skilled wage, for all delegates to be elected. There was no call to democratise and politicise the link with the ALP through the election of delegates to party conferences.

The current practice is for union secretaries to hand-pick delegates to ALP conference, centralising their bureaucratic power, and disempowering the rank and file. Of course, the ETU and others point to severe shortfalls in the campaigning militancy of the ACTU. ETU Victoria Secretary, Troy Gray, told the Guardian that "time and time again" after Labor wins government, the union movement is given "crumbs".

This is a truism as old as the ALP itself. While the ACTU and ALP dismiss the divisions, it points to working-class dissatisfaction with cost-of-living pressures ahead of the federal election, due by May. ETU Victoria Secretary, Troy Gray, told the Australian newspaper in September: "There's a real 'fuck Labor, pay back Labor' feeling among a lot of blue-collar workers that I have never seen before," he said. "That's Labor's biggest problem at the next election. They will never, ever, ever win the vote back of those blue-collar workers."

If that is the case, what political leadership and direction are these union leaders outlining for such disaffected workers? Trade unions are a shell of what they could be and are dominated by a careerist layer. While union membership pipped upwards from an historic low for the first time in many years in December (from 12.5% to 13.1% of the workforce), this was all in the public sector – with private sector unionisation actually falling from 8.3% to 7.9%. An entire generation of workers has no lived reality of being unionised.

The Left

On the Trotskyist left there was a frisson of excitement that this summit might lead to a breakaway federation of militant unions. Wrong and misguided. In reality, this is a factional play within the existing trade union bureaucracy between those aligned with the exiled CFMEU leadership and those who in the ACTU who have supported the Albanese government installing state administrators to run that union.

Independent working-class politics, union democracy and widespread militancy in pursuit of political and economic demands are not on the table from either of these factional groups. Devoid of a political program for the working class to take power, most of the Trotskyite and Stalinite left has called for strikes to defeat the administration as strategy or merely repeated support for the exiled and disgraced CFMEU leaderships in NSW and Victoria.

While no doubt strikes could be a tactical weapon in a political campaign to transform the unions and defeat state interference – not just the administration of the CFMEU but the Fair Work Act, which is a straitjacket on union independence – to elevate strikes to the level strategy is a dead end. But we should expect this from the existing far-left, most of it informed by radical syndicalism rather than Marxism. Syndicalists raise the economic and union struggle as the height of working-class action. They paint all such actions with socialistic colours.

Should communists work in reactionary unions?

The short answer is yes, yes, and yes. The communist program for the working class is not a syndicalist response to capitalist oppression, but a political response for working-class democratic rule and general human emancipation. Even in the most reactionary and bureaucratised of unions, communists should organise where they can – not to split hundreds or even thousands of workers away into 'red unions', but to transform the entire working-class movement into a weapon for socialism and workers' power.

As abhorrent as the SDA leadership is, it was an error to have formed the RAFFWU fast food union; a syndicalist dead end. While we need a mass political party of the working class organised around a clear and separate democratic-republican and revolutionary program, our aim is not to slice off bits of the unions to chemically pure left organisations. That is narrow syndicalism.

Russian revolutionary Vladimir Lenin wrote on this in the early days of the Russian Revolution, addressing radicalised workers and communists in Western Europe who wanted to split from reactionaries in the unions.

In his famous pamphlet 'Left Wing Communism' (1920), Lenin wrote: "Because of the reactionary and counter-revolutionary character of the trade union *top leadership*, they [the German Left Communists] jump to the conclusion that ... we must withdraw from the trade unions, refuse to work in them, and create new and *artificial* forms of labour organisation! This is so unpardonable a blunder that it is tantamount to the greatest service Communists could render the bourgeoisie."

Further he writes: "To refuse to work in the reactionary trade unions means leaving the insufficiently developed or backward masses of workers under the influence of the reactionary leaders, the agents of the bourgeoisie, the labour aristocrats, or [quoting Engels on the British unions] 'workers who have become completely bourgeois'."

Of course, this was within living memory of the foundation of many unions. Our syndicalist friends today will no doubt argue that (some of) the unions have transformed completely, such as the SDA retail union, and are so reactionary, and 'artificial' that splitting small numbers away into Red Unions is the best way forward.

This is as rubbish now as it was a century ago. The most pressing missing element is a united communist party: only by organising serious Marxist trends into a single militant political party can we even start to do useful and sustainable fraction work in the unions against the reactionaries and the bureaucrats.

Even during Mussolini's Fascist dictatorship in Italy, the underground Communist Party organised in the fascist 'union' organisations. Communists need to organise a communist party – and we need a program that seeks to transform the unions, not foster syndicalist illusions in breakaway grouplets.

The workers' movements in Spain and France are historically weakened through a multitude of union confederations that are loyal to different political parties and trends. We do not need that in Australia.

VS withdrawal from Calwell: A tactical retreat, or a symptom of bad strategy?

Anthony Furia

In December, the Victorian Socialists (VS) announced on Twitter the withdrawal of their candidate Omar Hassan from the Calwell region for the upcoming federal election [see above] – moving him instead to Scullin. In Calwell, a region in which VS has previously achieved strong results amongst a working class population, this came as somewhat of a surprise to both VS members and others amongst the socialist left. The immediate question was: why?

What could motivate such a withdrawal, seeming to sacrifice the gains made by VS as a project in such a region? The official response by VS was two-pronged; it stated that Omar, the candidate – "a Lebanese Australian socialist and long-time Palestine solidarity activist – advocated for this largely out of respect for Mohamed El-Masri, who is running in Calwell with the Greens." Yet the VS statement also argued that "The people of Calwell will, it's likely, be spoilt for choice – with a number of strong candidates on the left." and a "small party" such as VS thus needed to "consider carefully how to best focus our resources."

In essence, the decision by the VS executive seems to be motivated in part by the wishes of the candidate themselves (with an emphasis on identity in the VS statement), and in part by the issue of resource allocation. There are two problems that we are immediately confronted with from this explanation: democratic control over candidacy, and the VS platform (and program, or lack thereof). It seems unusual that a self-acknowledged "small party" would have candidate placement determined and managed by an executive committee, and subject to the whims of the candidate itself – rather than the organisation as a whole.

Granted, VS stated plainly that Omar "advocated", not 'decided', the withdrawal from Calwell – and this is important. Potential elected representatives must be held under party control strategically, not subject to their independent whims. However, if this is indeed the case, it seems odd to focus much of the explanation for

[Omar Hassan is now running in Scullin. Photo: Victorian Socialists FB]

this withdrawal on individual candidates and their feelings towards one another. Charitably, we can assume this was due to questions from VS members and put it to the side for now – with the cautious reminder of the importance of centralised electoral operations.

The other issue, on the determination of candidacy by an executive, can in part be argued from the position that democratically determining the position of each candidate is inflexible and bureaucratic – to which I would agree – however, it seems as if the withdrawal of such a candidate should be something that requires at least some sort of consultative, if not expressly democratic, process. Of course, the stakes in this instance are relatively low – but we must plan for the future in our conduct, and ensure processes are in place for candidate withdrawal, and transparency in doing so.

The second issue raised by the VS statements on the withdrawal is more pressing – namely, the VS platform and lack of a cohered program. If it is truly a problem of resource allocation; reasoned through a belief that the Calwell electoral field is "spoilt for choice" with multiple left-of-labor independents, and thus VS running is an

unnecessary drain on resources, then perhaps the problem is the platform that VS is running on. There should be a substantial difference between a socialist, running on a socialist platform, and any left-of-labor independent or Greens candidate.

Our platform should be informed by a minimum program, by a road to workers power and the demands we believe are necessary parts of that road. It should not be an attempt to tail or appeal to vague left sympathies or a 'progressive' youth vote. It should be, in form, a platform for workers power. This does not mean we must run on the immediate and singular cry of "world socialism now." Indeed, it is entirely possible to run a generally 'left-populist' appearing campaign using the demands of a minimum program – demands for democracy, housing, rent control, price control, wage benefits, and against militarism and war. All such things are necessary for workers' power and can be used to formulate an appropriate communist political platform for electoral campaigns.

In this instance, the gap between the politics of a Greens candidate, of a soft social democrat independent, and the politics of a socialist candidate, would be insurmountable. Electoral agitation surrounding our demands would be agitation explicitly surrounding aspects of workers power, and consciousness raising work would be direct and explicit, instead of the 'consciousness raising' of VS today, which clings to transitional nonsense and the repetition that workers must be "met where they're at" (apparently the workers are all supporters of the Greens and social democracy – a surprise to the workers themselves).

Of course, the problem with running such a platform for VS is that they do not have a minimum program yet. They have a constitution, a somewhat confused mix of minimum and maximum demands, and they have their varying electoral platforms. This is an embarrassing display of reformism, but there is no coherent program. Thus, the ever-present danger of parliamentary opportunism; without a program, VS understands that its platform is a platform which can be contested by, can be equated with, and can lose ground to, a particularly strong Greens campaign, or a trade unionist, activist independent.

Are we making much hay out of something with minimal immediate impacts? In some ways, yes. The withdrawal of a single VS candidate from a single region in a period of communist organisation without a party, without unity, and without heightened struggle is unlikely to have significant consequences, directly speaking. Yet it is a decision which is symptomatic of bad strategy, which betrays a certain orientation towards electoral work in VS. One that, if maintained, will serve only to weaken communist organisation across Australia. The important thing here is not the direct consequences of this decision (although these seem to be negative in of themselves), but the underlying motivations for this decision – the strategic orientation of VS demonstrated by tactical maneuvers such as this.

[Bendigo Victorian Socialists members at an Invasion Day rally, 2024. Photo: Victorian Socialists FB]

The Problem with Vanguards

Andreas Chari

[Lenin gives a speech]

This article first appeared in Prometheus Magazine, published in Summer 2024.

The Current Situation

"The 'party' is simply this organised collectivity that allows a 'we' to form and act decisively."

Donald Parkinson, *Without a Party, We Have Nothing*

Recent debates amongst the left have revitalised the need to discuss the old organisation question again. Now more than ever, it is more relevant to answer this question since it is only through political organisations that the working class becomes a political class and a class for itself. This piece justifies the necessity for the most crucial form of organisation: the party of the proletariat.

We need a political party to merge scientific socialism — as in Marxist theory and the organised communists — with the existing self-organisation of the working class movement. If kept apart, they are each weak on their own. This merger is necessary to raise the working class's awareness of its world-historic mission to win the battle for democracy and communism, to elevate political struggle to the terrain of high politics, and to contest hegemony with the state. However, this party must have a specific relation to the worker movement to successfully bring the 'good news' of communism to the working class and raise its awareness to a political one. It cannot be a broad party uniting everyone under a "left" banner and embracing unprincipled unity for a small electoral percentage. As Chris Strafford argues, while in principle, there is nothing wrong with communists working with others, elevating this partial unity into permanent coalitions and parties only ends up in practice with the revolutionary wing silencing itself or moving rightwards to prevent splits. It cannot be a sect party either, uniting a small clique of 'revolutionaries' under strict adherence to the cult of personality of one or two theorists, substituting the political practice of a class with activities like selling newspapers at demonstrations. As rightly argued by Sai Englert, this kind of party-building focuses more on an organisation's reproduction than on building the democratic counter-hegemonic apparatus we desperately need.

To be called a party 'of the proletariat', the revolutionary party needs to have a different relation to the worker movement; it must be a mass-vanguard party. Its mass character comes from being an open, democratic organisation that aims to bring the 'good news' of communism to the working-class majority. The mass character ensures it can engage with the working class, winning the majority to its programme. Its vanguard character comes from containing the part of the working class equipped with a scientific analysis of society and its history while being at the forefront of any struggle against oppression and exploitation as tribunes of the oppressed. These two characteristics do not contradict but necessitate each other. The division between mass and vanguard parties resulted from the long history of the worker movement and our famous

misreadings of it. Maintaining this distinction now creates two equally impotent varieties of political parties: parties still stuck within the logic of Labourist hegemony and electoral opportunism on the one hand and, on the other, parties preoccupied with their "imaginary Lenin" and unable to engage substantially with the workers' movement beyond the odd recruitment drive.

The Function of Vanguards

"Becoming a party is not crossing a certain numerical threshold or passing certain structural benchmarks or being recognised as such by the state. It is not something one declares, but something one does."

Salar Mohandesi, *Party as Articulator*

We need to look at the party, not by asking whether it has a place in our movement — to echo Rodrigo Nunes's argument, if parties exist, they have a place in the worker movement — the question becomes instead their role. What are the mass-vanguard party's functions? What does it do within the worker movement? I have narrowed it down to two functions — vanguard as an educator and vanguard as a coordinator — to illustrate the party's role in raising class awareness within the worker movement and how it relates to the worker movement as a class organiser.

[Members of the Marxist Unity Group at the 2023 DSA Convention. Photo: Cosmonaut Magazine]

Vanguard as an Educator

The first function, the educator function, comes from seeing a vanguard as a specific relation in terms of class awareness. It allows the proletariat to raise its awareness, understand the cause of its exploitation, and see an alternative to the existing order. This function depends on the following wager: Do all workers come to socialist awareness all at once, or do some of them, the vanguard, come to socialist awareness in advance? If the latter, what are the reciprocal relations between the vanguard and the rest of the class to intentionally ensure that the entire class is becoming conscious? Suppose we cannot guarantee the growth of class awareness through the contradictions of capitalism. In that case, we aim to create the infrastructure needed to facilitate the collective learning process, which will raise the awareness of the working class as a whole. Creating this space of mass pedagogy is crucial not only to ensure that knowledge gets democratised across the worker movement but also that it is, in terms of ideological hegemony, independent from the influence of bourgeois ideologies.

The revolutionary party is the collective memory of the history of class struggle. It is a living archive of accumulated knowledge, preparing the present working class for future battles based on the lessons of the past. By engaging in mass pedagogy based on the accumulated experiences of the class struggle and constantly reproducing this relation by expanding this position of the vanguard to a larger and larger section of the class, the political party spreads socialist awareness in every part of the worker movement. It, therefore, abolishes any privileged status of a permanent vanguard relation. This pedagogical function orients the growing vanguard to a struggle for hegemony, drawing lines of demarcation in theoretical and political practices against deviations or currents that prevent the worker movement from realising its world-historic task. The ultimate goal is to democratise socialist knowledge within the worker movement and make the proletariat aware of its world-historic mission.

Vanguard as a Coordinator

The second function, the coordinator function, comes from seeing a vanguard as a specific relation in terms of the political practice of the worker movement — something which helps to unite the worker movement and gives the capacity to strategise collectively. The party provides this coordinating role through theorising

communist programmes. These programmes clarify the struggles of the working class in the present and raise political and economic demands that unite the working class into a battle for hegemony. Such a party would take deliberate steps to ensure the growth of political awareness of the working class through its continuous engagement with the worker movement. It can then be seen not as an external force substituting its activity for that of the class but as a strategic weapon that emerges from the necessity to merge the existing self-activity of the working class with communist strategy. Being a vanguard then becomes a relational function within the movement, which opens up paths for the movement to follow beyond its daily or momentary struggles.

The struggle of the working class necessitates building democratic organisations that can stand for the independent interests of the working class and allow them to take political power. These organisations are needed both to shield the working class from the state's hegemony and to ensure present economic struggles do not get isolated within their respective spheres of the movement but become universal as a struggle to conquer political power. The party thus ensures continuity and solidarity across different struggles, countering attempts by various ideological state apparatuses to erase or co-opt them. This defensive mechanism is achieved by intentionally linking its coordinating infrastructure with every liberation struggle against oppression and exploitation, both nationally and internationally, orienting them towards communist political struggle. The political party provides the worker movement with the tools needed to replace the existing order through the articulation of political programmes and the establishment of counter-hegemonic institutions that connect various struggles of the working class and, until then, act as a tribune to expose the undemocratic nature of the existing order.

Vanguards & Unity

"The point is not that the party is the whole of the movement. It is that we need a party, and currently do not have one."

Mike Macnair, *We need political action*

The last two sections of this article have focused entirely on what the party does. The history of the worker movement has shown, however, that we cannot assume that random far-left groups can start declaring themselves as the "Communist Party", write a political programme and that in and of itself will be able to build a mass movement organically. Especially here in Britain, quite the opposite has happened: endless varieties of party sects or broad parties declare themselves as the revolutionary representatives of the working class and are entirely out of touch with the worker movement. Therefore, we need to draw lessons from our history on what kind of party institutions and culture are required for the party to fulfil its essential functions.

The mass vanguard party needs unity under a shared revolutionary programme to build the pedagogical relations necessary to raise the political awareness of its class and to create the organic links within the worker movement to present a political alternative to the existing order. For that to happen, we must reject both the party sect's theoretical unity and the broad unity with the reformist wing of the worker movement. To overcome broad unity, we must strive only for partial unity with reformist forces to obtain specific political demands and not attempt to elevate this partial unity into a need to organise into the same party. In terms of theoretical unity — we need the party institutions that subordinate the bureaucrats to the membership to reject this. For the party to retain its ability to elevate the awareness of the class and unite its struggle under a revolutionary programme, it must allow the membership to organise independently of its full-timers. In practice, any elected role has a specific mandate, is recallable, and has specific term limits. The membership also has the freedom to organise in factions.

The right to organise permanent factions is necessary first to allow the membership to organise within the party against the political lines of the elected officials if needed. Second, the struggle between different tendencies ensures that the party embeds itself within the political struggles and demands of various sections of the working class and can allow all differences of opinion within the working class a chance to be heard and unite under a political programme. Political factions and debate, therefore, should not only be allowed within or around the same period of party congresses but, through permanent factions, create a culture of debate and polemic worthy of its task to unite the working class. Unity of the existing organised communists under a party, to paraphrase Lenin, cannot be decreed; it must be worked for! Only the existence of permanent factions can ensure the development of a revolutionary democratic

organisation that can maintain connections with the struggles of the working class and be able to deliver a genuinely revolutionary political programme.

For the party membership to unite in diversity and subordinate its officials, it must follow a specific set of democratic republican principles when building and running its organisations. It must be organised around the principle of liberty as non-domination, meaning that no position within an organisation must be permanent, and each position must be electable under a term limit and a mandate by the membership. It also means that there should be no roadblocks which deny the participation or election of any member to any full-time position, based on the insistence on the inclusion of all of the working class to join and organise their platforms to voice their opinion within the party's structures.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the necessity for a mass-vanguard party within the worker movement is paramount. Such a party serves dual functions: as an educator, spreading socialist awareness and historical consciousness throughout the working class, and as a coordinator, providing strategic unity and direction to various struggles against oppression and exploitation. This concept of a mass-vanguard party starkly contrasts with both broad coalitions devoid of ideological cohesion and narrow sects fixated on doctrinal purity. Instead, it embodies a dynamic unity in diversity, allowing for the engagement of diverse struggles and perspectives within a framework of democratic principles. The necessity of these principles follows from the liberties the party membership needs to coordinate inside its organisation while keeping control of their full-timers. These principles follow the lessons of centuries of communist politics.

Crucially, the mass-vanguard party's role is not one of parliamentary cretinism or substitution but instead of facilitating and empowering the working class itself. It acts as a conduit for collective action, ensuring that the proletariat emerges as a politically conscious and unified force capable of challenging the existing state order. Thus, the task ahead lies in cultivating a party that embodies the working class's aspirations and struggles while remaining true to democracy, unity, and revolutionary socialism.

Without building such a party that can serve as a laboratory of mass intellectuality and raise the awareness of the working class, without the organisational infrastructure and political authority that can provide an alternative to the existing state, we will only fall back into the Groundhog Day of the existing left: the localist eclecticism of the small theory circles, the broad unity and electoral triangulation of the Labour adjacent left or another iteration of the "People's Front of Judea versus Judean People's Front" of the 'revolutionary' sects. To paraphrase Gramsci: The old world is dying; now is the time for mass-vanguard parties.

Subscribe to Partisan!

Have Partisan delivered to your door for $10* a month.

patreon.com/partisanmagazine

**the platform applies all relevant sales tax which may add up to more than $10*

How to Build a Party

Mila Volkova

[Rupert Lockwood from the Communist Party of Australia (1920)]

The Central Committee of the RCO wrote in a recent letter to Red Ant:

"With every split in the movement, we become even weaker. As long as we are competing with one another, we are even less than the sum of our parts. But we are not surprised by these events. This is the inevitable result of the narrow "sect" form of socialist organising, wherein an organisation founds itself on strict adherence to a certain set of theoretical principles, rather than a practical political program."

The question of how to rebuild a party looms over Australian socialists. Since the 90s, we have been without a mass communist party and for that we have suffered. We must connect the disparate socialist movement in an organisation that can reproduce the struggle over generations. The top priority of the socialist movement in Australia must be the refoundation of a meaningfully united communist party.

Without this, we have no chance of taking power and making universal human liberation a fact rather than an abstract legal principle. We must prepare workers to overcome the accelerating crisis of climate change, financial crashes, and the latest wave of nationalist, racist, and misogynistic reactionary hatred.

For thirty years, numerous strategies have been deployed and all have failed, yet wannabe party-builders re-deploy them again and again. A critical re-evaluation of party building strategies is in order.

The Waiters, The Builders, and the Entryists

There are three dominant party-building strategies in Australia. Most are familiar with the first, which can be referred to as "The Waiters", epitomised by Socialist Alternative. This strategy artificially divides working-class consciousness into "spontaneity" and "theory", assuming that most workers are only capable of the former, and that a mass party simply cannot be built until the revolutionary moment is already upon us.

History has clearly shown that successful revolutions, such as the Russian Revolution of 1917, require decades of political education from the vanguard upon the remaining sub-conscious workers, not that revolt alone suddenly made workers revolutionary. This narrative assumes that close theoretical unity and clarity is critical for socialists to lead a working-class revolution, but this is historically untrue.

The Bolsheviks remained a deeply factional party during the revolution. The banning of internal factions occurred after 1917 and was a symptom, and accelerator, of the revolution's degeneration. This needs to be acknowledged as a mistake rather than something to emulate. The endpoint of this strategy is not a strategy at all, but the recruitment-opportunism that Socialist Alternative is famous for.

The second strategy is less understood but just as common. The "Builders", including Solidarity, the Freedom Socialist Party, and the Anarchist groups, attempt to lay the groundwork for a party (or some derivative of it) by rebuilding the basis of one, a mass workers movement. While this strategy is more practical, it suffers from the same artificial divide between spontaneity and theoretical education described above.

In practice, the Builders conceal their revolutionary politics, assuming that trade union militancy will naturally lead to revolutionary consciousness. They aim to build broad-based rank-and-file factions within unions rather than explicitly socialist caucuses alongside other groups. The result of this strategy is a constant cycle of build-burnout, where socialists practically submit themselves to the needs of trade union bureaucrats. These factions are open about their politics and thus win over more workers. Only political education and a party can sustain long-term organisation of the working-class.

Both these strategies hold to a theory of revolution that overemphasises the spontaneous action of the working class at the expense of deliberate organisation and political education. They believe it is bureaucratic to set out an explicit program ahead of time and openly build support for it, because this diminishes the opportunity for the organic expression of consciousness. It is up to them to disseminate the correct line only at the moment of the revolution, and it is through having the correct line that one's group is taken from sect to revolutionary mass party. Therefore, it is necessary to tightly control membership of the organisation to ensure the purity of this line until the time comes.

The mistakes of these two strategies can be summed up as "economism", the tendency to emphasise workers organising over economic conditions rather than for working class political power.

This is not to say we can summon up revolution out of thin air if we were to read hard enough. Rather, that socialists can only succeed where they combine politics with economic struggle. We must aim to rebuild working class institutions, but openly as communists, and with a secondary aim towards recruitment and political education. A proper socialist doesn't consider these separate at all.

The third strategy is that of "the Entryists", who aim to join either the Greens or Labor parties en-masse, win leadership, and transform them into socialist parties. The strongest example of this strategy is the Socialist Alliance. It is true that Labor's base is in the working-class, while the Greens base is in the renting middle-class, but both are reformist parties.

In practice, this means that attempts to pull them to revolutionary politics are always met with undemocratic purges and road-blocking from the reformist wing of the party, no matter how democratic it may seem on paper. In the first place, it is difficult to build a revolutionary bloc when one is also tied to building, and recruiting into, a rotting capitalist-aligned clique. Confused and unsuccessful agitation, propaganda, and recruitment efforts are the result.

This creates a tendency to opportunistically adopt reformist politics, or abandon the political independence of workers in favour of cross-class alliance-making, which Socialist Alliance is a perfect example of. Indeed, the Marxist Unity Group within the Democratic Socialists of America is struggling with this tendency.

What is clear is that success requires the organised efforts of the entire socialist movement. Disorganised, divided, at one another's throats, we constantly undermine and embarrass ourselves. It is the nature of workers to unite and fight for political power. Against the three rebuilding strategies outlined above, the

[RCO comrades in Melbourne, 2024]

RCO advocates for an entirely different approach.

The RCO's Strategy

Rather than founding itself on strict agreement with a theoretical dogma, RCO membership is conditional on acceptance of a written-out program. This program is an attempt to concretely set out how the Australian working class should achieve political power. However, this program is the product of a lively internal democracy and yearly rewrites, it isn't rigid or passed down to the membership from bureaucratic leaders. While members accept unity of action in working to implement this program, they are free to form internal factions

[Socialist Alliance's 17th National Conference, 2023]

and criticise it.

The RCO believes that this kind of unity, "programmatic unity", is the only workable strategy for uniting the socialist movement in Australia.

Because the RCO does not see itself in competition with other socialists, but working with them in a concerted movement, it is able to prioritise rebuilding a party. This is opposed to the common sect behaviour of dis-unity in action, pursuing total victory of one's own sect above all others, to the detriment of the movement as a whole. The RCO's strategy is entirely focused on modelling a picture of sustainable unity to other socialists and building connections with them to show off its success.

Comparing the RCO strategy to the others, we see a turn towards robust political education. The aim is that by recruiting from the pool of socialists not already in an organisation and developing them into hardened, independent, and critical thinking comrades, we can raise our profile among the disparate socialist movement and win it over to our programmatic-style politics.

This requires constant dialogue with the sects, which is achieved through the Partisan (an attempt to "model" what a good multi-tendency newspaper should look like), attending their events, working with them in the social movements, and building common electoral fronts.

This strategy is intended to produce a series of "unity congresses", which aim to fuse with other partyist socialist groups as they emerge. The RCO does not consider these congresses to be a refoundation of the party, but as part of this strategy to gradually win over the movement. Rather, the proper refoundation of a communist party is a completely different event that unites the entire existing socialist movement and, ideally, dissolves all other organisations, including them as internal factions of a programmatically unified party with one-member-one-vote.

This strategy is on the right path. The RCO has experienced decent growth since its formation in 2022 without compromising on its principle of "quality over quantity". RCO comrades are known for their dedication and theoretical development. We have demonstrated our meaningful dedication to joint work by working closely alongside Socialist Alternative in the University of Queensland Gaza Solidarity Encampment, and we have strong relations with them in Brisbane as a result.

More work needs to be done to build connections with other groups in Melbourne, but we are demonstrating our eagerness to do so. Through our past work alongside other socialists in the university Palestine encampments and ongoing work building a partyist caucus in Victorian Socialists, we are laying the groundwork. The RCO is punching well above its weight, considering the high profile of its political orientation among other socialists despite its seventy some members.

Not an Alliance, not a Coalition, a Party

Currently, the RCO's strategy is dismissed completely by the other sects and accused of being "just another" attempt at broad left unity. A common comparison is made between the RCO and Socialist Alliance, but this is a mistake. There are significant differences between the RCO and Socialist Alliance.

Although Socialist Alliance had a program, this was not the basis for unity, and membership was conditional on the vague self-declaration of being a socialist. Because Socialist Alliance structured itself as an electoral front for multiple sects where affiliated groups had special rights within the coalition, there was no coherent political principle on which unity could be constructed.

Socialist Alliance collapsed because being a socialist is not a matter of self-identification, theoretical principles, or vague aesthetics. To be a socialist is to be proactively committed to a revolutionary political program for working class rule and the transition to communism.

When the Democratic Socialist Party (the instigators of Socialist Alliance) dissolved into it and attempted to transform it into a true socialist party rather than a loose coalition, the other groups left, leaving us with the organisation we see today.

Without unity to this political program, or a form of it, there was no coherent basis for membership. The only possible basis for unity between the factions of the Socialist Alliance was an opportunistic alignment of interests, but convenience isn't a stable bedrock from which to build unity. Without commitment to a concrete common goal, Socialist Alliance was unable to build a genuinely unified socialist party. The consequence was a reformist program and a largely reformist membership.

The Anti-Sectarian Sect

The RCO is a characteristically different organisation from Socialist Alliance, with a characteristically different strategy. We understand that we must work tirelessly to win the socialist movement over to our vision for unity. We do so backed with the knowledge that history has shown, time and time again, that this is the only successful strategy for building a socialist party.

But the RCO remains a sect, even if it is an anti-sectarian one. The RCO must do even more to engage the wider socialist movement by building common organising committees on issues like the environment, feminism, indigenous liberation, etc. We must demonstrate just how serious we are about programmatic unity by modelling how a principled minority should behave, and how successful an organisational model programmatic unity is.

It is not inevitable that we convince the movement of our politics. Yet we know that there are no shortcuts, and there can be no cashing in of opportunism in the rebuilding of the party or the mass workers movement. This is the only way forward. We are patient.

Demand Freedom for all Political Prisoners

As Russia continues to wage an imperialist war against Ukraine, Communists of all stripes have fallen under the boot of state repression (both in Russia and Ukraine). Oppose the Moscow and Kyiv gangsters, demand the release of all political prisoners.

Russian Marxist Boris Kagarlitsky was imprisoned by the Russian state under phony “anti-terrorism” charges in 2023. As of February 2024, he has been sentenced to five years in a prison colony (Meduza).

Ukrainian Trotskyist Bogdan Syrotiuk was arrested by the Ukrainian Security Service on April 25th 2024. As of writing, he is being held in Nikolaev in deplorable conditions. He is being falsely charged with being a Russian state operative and a propagandist for Moscow’s imperialist invasion. If found guilty, he faces a life sentence (WSWS).

Many more communists, trade unionists, and anti-war protesters are being incarcerated arbitrarily by the Russian and Ukrainian governments. We must support them all, and demand their immediate release.

In addition, the Partisan calls for the freedom of all political prisoners, such as Mumia Abu-Jamal and Leonard Peltier who still languish in the prisons of the American imperialists. In Britain, the Filton 10 now face years in prison for their actions against the war profiteers at Elbit Systems. One of these comrades, Zoë Rogers, has just spent her 21st Birthday behind bars.

In Australia, activists from Blockade Australia, Fireproof Australia and other groups are held in detention, or under surveillance by state intelligence.

With a ceasefire in Gaza, we must not forget the tens of thousands of Palestinians who languish in Israeli prisons and detention centres.

We encourage communists and militants of all kinds of agigate for the release of all political prisoners, be they communists, militants, activists or other kinds of radicals.

WE'RE ONLINE!

Find Partisan online today

PARTISAN!
CC Open Letter to Red Ant
LETTER
LEWISHAM: Nazis under 'heavy' manners
A Communist Theory of Race
LETTER: Cultrue's contrarianism
VS withdrawal from Cornwall: A tactical retreat, or a symptom of bad strategy?

partisanmagazine.org

WORKERS!

BLACK AND WHITE: UNITE AND FIGHT

from the Central Committee of the Revolutionary Communist Organisation

The 26th of January, 1778 marked the arrival of the First Fleet in Sydney Cove, and the beginning of the genocide of this continent's indigenous people. On that day, this land was seized by the British Empire for the purpose of establishing a penal colony, to which it would exile its most destitute citizens. The colonies established by the Empire attempted to wipe out indigenous people and their ancient culture through massacres and forced assimilation.

The now long-passed landing is officially commemorated as "Australia Day", and acts as a celebration for this country built on slavery, the genocide of Aboriginal people, and the innumerable suffering and deaths of working class people both here and abroad. No working class person of any race has any interest in recognising "Australia Day"; doing so means standing with the bosses and landlords of this country.

The whole working class, of all races and religions, must instead seek to bring itself to power and bring about true democracy. We need to replace the bourgeois Parliaments, courts, and police with a united, democratic republic. We need to tear up the colonial constitution and create a new and democratic society in which racial oppression and colonial chauvinism are finally overturned.

Our democratic republic must begin a national Treaty process as a foundation for genuine reconciliation, and it needs to ensure the involvement of all willing Aboriginal people on their own terms. We must fight for indigenous control over indigenous affairs! Systematic reparations must be paid to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island communities, who are to have full control of how they are used. Guaranteed free access to quality housing, education, and healthcare for all is needed to end Indigenous and worker oppression, and to ensure that the gap in life expectancy and health outcomes are closed.

We can only arrive at such a position through communist revolution. To do this, we need to support the struggles of the working class, and all oppressed peoples that are part of it. And to get there, we need our own party, the party of the working class. This is what we call the Communist Party, and it will be formed by reuniting the entire socialist movement in Australia. This is the most important political task for socialists today, and it is the main goal that we in the Revolutionary Communist Organisation are working towards every day.

FIGHT FOR BLACK LIBERATION!

FIGHT FOR A DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC!

revcomorg.info *partisanmagazine.org*

What happened to Red Ant?

Anthony Furia

[Red Ant members before the split]

On January 7th, a letter was released from Red Ant social media, and posted on their website. Now titled “Red Spark,” this letter, since deleted, is published in full below - for the sake of publicity and openness in debate, whether or not the comrades involved are partial to such things.

“Dear Friends,

I am writing to inform you that the majority of the founders of Red Ant have decided to pursue the original project under a new name, Red Spark.

2024 was a successful year for the Red Ant Collective. After the tour of respected international socialist Vijay Prashad, the collective saw a rapid influx of new members. With this influx came many new ideas, some of which were significantly different from those Red Ant had been pursuing over the previous years.

At the December 2024 Red Ant Conference, it became clear that these significant differences were irreconcilable. The founders of Red Ant have decided that rather than continue with a destructive debate, it would be best to continue Red Ant as a new project: Red Spark.

Red Spark remains committed to the same ideas that Red Ant was founded on. We are resolutely anti-imperialist, socialist, and intent on moving toward a more organised political group inspired by the ideas of those from the Marxist and Leninist traditions.

We hope you’ll continue supporting the Red Spark project, just as you supported the Red Ant before it. We invite you to continue subscribing to our regular Red Spark newsletter, which will keep you informed about all our upcoming projects. You don't need to do anything to continue to be a subscriber.

We look forward to seeing you at our future events.

Yours Truly,

Max Lane, National Chairperson of Red Spark, on behalf of the collective.

P.S. All financial contributions to Red Ant will be returned to Red Ant members in proportion to their contributions over the course of Red Ant's existence. Red Spark will consequently be starting from a lower financial base, so any future contributions will be extremely welcome.”

With no forewarning, or elaboration on what “significant differences” were (“insurmountable differences” which were never explained), Red Spark was formed from Red Ant. With a grandiose flourish, Red Spark had seized not just the website and social media of Red Ant, but also the bank account - all “financial contributions,” and money made from selling (mostly) books.

Many comrades wondered what the “insurmountable differences” were, and whether the original Red Ant still existed. The question of what the “insurmountable differences” were remains open, yet thanks to a lengthy

conversation with Brendan D, of the newly elected (just prior to the split) Political Committee of Red Ant, the second has been answered in full. And, thanks to Brendan, we now have a more comprehensive picture of the events that preceded the farcical RSDLP cosplaying of the Red Spark/Red Ant split.

Members of Red Spark were also contacted for comment, yet did not respond to requests for an interview or discussion. Without such a comment, and due to the extremely private, insular nature of any and all debate prior to the split (and indeed afterwards), we have to rely on Red Ant's perspective.

In the days preceding Red Ant's 2024 national conference, Sam King (at the time an informal 'leader' and member of the Political Committee of Red Ant) published a piece in the internal bulletin of Red Ant criticising two members, comrades Brendan and Nandina, over a compilation of tactical disagreements ranging from thrilling 'significant' differences such as; meeting frequency, posters vs social media, how meetings should be run, and the utility of tabling/stalling on campus.

Partisan has been provided access to this piece, and the pieces it is responding to - however, upon the request of Red Ant comrades, we will not be publishing any of them. Debate of all kinds should be had publicly - how else do we expect to learn without the conflict of ideas pertaining to tactics and strategy? Perhaps indeed the insular nature of this so-called debate was a contributing factor in the split itself.

In the most general and good-faith interpretation of such a bitter (if seemingly one-sided) internal struggle, these questions can be seen as a manifestation of the classic conflict of the sect form; leadership opposed to membership. Old guard opposed to new. Calcified bureaucracy opposed to excitable cadres.

In the main, comrades opposed to Sam King, in his own words, have engaged in an "active facilitation of non-members" in opposing the organisational line, have weakened the supposed "Leninist political approach" in which the party leadership works to "raise the level of consciousness" of members.

Interestingly, there is no mention of reciprocity between membership and leadership here - does the leadership simply guide members like sheep? Do they descend from heaven and impose upon membership the correct Marxist line, thanks to their enlightened consciousness? They have done this through facilitating non-members to speak at meetings (allegedly "prioritising" them), through opposing a post-Vijay Prashad tour meeting (in favour of one-on-one coffee chats with contacts), and through advocating for a casual post-tour meet and greet, as opposed to a full introductory meeting. The most egregious sins against Leninism (which here seems synonymous with 'the ex-Democratic Socialist Party leadership of Red Ant') are minor tactical disputes.

On the basis of tactical disagreements such as these, Sam King attacks both comrades in the article - Brendan's name is mentioned seventeen times in a seven page document, and Nandini and Brendan are accused of running a "wrecking operation" against "key aspects of our work."

[Former DSP leader, Red Ant founder and Red Spark leader Max Lane]

Allegedly backed by an article released by Max Lane (not available to Partisan), Sam King's position on these two comrades, and on the seemingly laughably minor tactical disagreements at stake, proved to be wildly unpopular with the broader membership. According to Brendan, this was in large part due to the tone of the piece - which was, Partisan can confirm, sectarian, and hyperbolic. Regardless of the reasons, the unpopularity of Sam's position (and, generally, Sam King) were readily displayed in two instances.

The first was at Red Ant's third day of conference - wherein Sam King and Max Lane's plans for the organisation into the future were either shot down or approved by an exceedingly narrow majority, and Sam King himself was elected to the new seven-person Political Committee as the seventh member; with a tied vote broken by the other nominee stepping down.

The second instance directly precedes conference - where Sam King, Max Lane, and those who align with his catastrophisation of minor tactical differences, began to organise in secrecy as a 'faction'. Previously, Red Ant has had no definitive position on whether or not factions are allowed - but secret ones are undoubtedly a breach of democratic centralism. The goals of this group remain unclear to Partisan - generally, the "plan" seemed to have been to regain control of Red Ant through some sort of coup or purge and expulsion of the members who opposed their supreme Leninist tradition.

Yet when such a secret faction was outed with the broader membership, they opted instead for a split, taking with them both the digital assets of Red Ant and the finances of the operation (which were under a single comrade's name, and not subject to any sort of democratic management or oversight). Such a stunning maneuver evidently won them no favours with the general membership, and proved the minority status of their position, with only fifteen comrades from the organisation opting to split.

Why split a communist organisation which occupied, quite evidently, a certain niche in the vile ecosystem of sects in their anti-imperialist emphasis and international connections? Neither possible answer is particularly satisfying, nor positive. Perhaps Sam King, Max Lane and affiliates are utterly enmeshed in their belief in purity through splitting, in the DSP "true leninism" (traced back 100+ years to develop the correct 'line' on every single strategic point or historical struggle) which must, on every point of tactical concern and strategy, shine brilliantly through.

In which case this split is entirely logical from their perspectives - after all, the correct Marxism is with them. The masses will, with time, follow - after they find all the other sects offering something extremely similar (including Red Ant) to fall short in some fatal criteria which they themselves meet.

The alternative is that this split is wholly, consciously self-motivated. It is, in its content, a split of an old bureaucracy from a new and increasingly experienced membership basis - this is a fact. The question is whether or not Sam King, Max Lane, Rurjik and others are conscious of this fact, and attempted a coup of the organisation self-servingly in order to preserve their personal power (over an organisation of fifty-five people).

This is probably not the case - although subconsciously it is almost certainly a motivating factor in the split and coup attempt. The reality of this split is likely a mix of the two - a farcical Bolshevism providing the comforting lie to comrades that they are motivated by a higher truth, by their correct leninism, and not by interpersonal conflict or their decreasing influence within the organisation.

The Red Ant/Red Spark split is thus almost boring in its content. Despite the dramatic context (seizure and redistribution of finances, primarily) it is the same embarrassing tale that communists have been retreading for the past 40 years (and in many cases more). A sect forms, based upon a specific theoretical line and tradition that seeks to preserve itself and dominate over all others. This sect maintains its own bureaucracy - largely founders of the organisation - who dictate in the main both the political and organisational life of the sect.

The sect grows to a certain size, as it fulfils a certain 'niche' in the far-left ecosystem that is not yet adequately filled. Conflicts of personality are exacerbated as membership increases, and debates are had over tactical questions which become increasingly existentialism (it's my way - 'Leninism' - or the highway - the total succumbing of the organisation to wreckers and revisionism). The membership peels away to form some other project surrounding new personalities that collapses or develops itself politically (the new, new, new line which has been on the correct side since Marx), or the leadership splits to preserve their ideological purity.

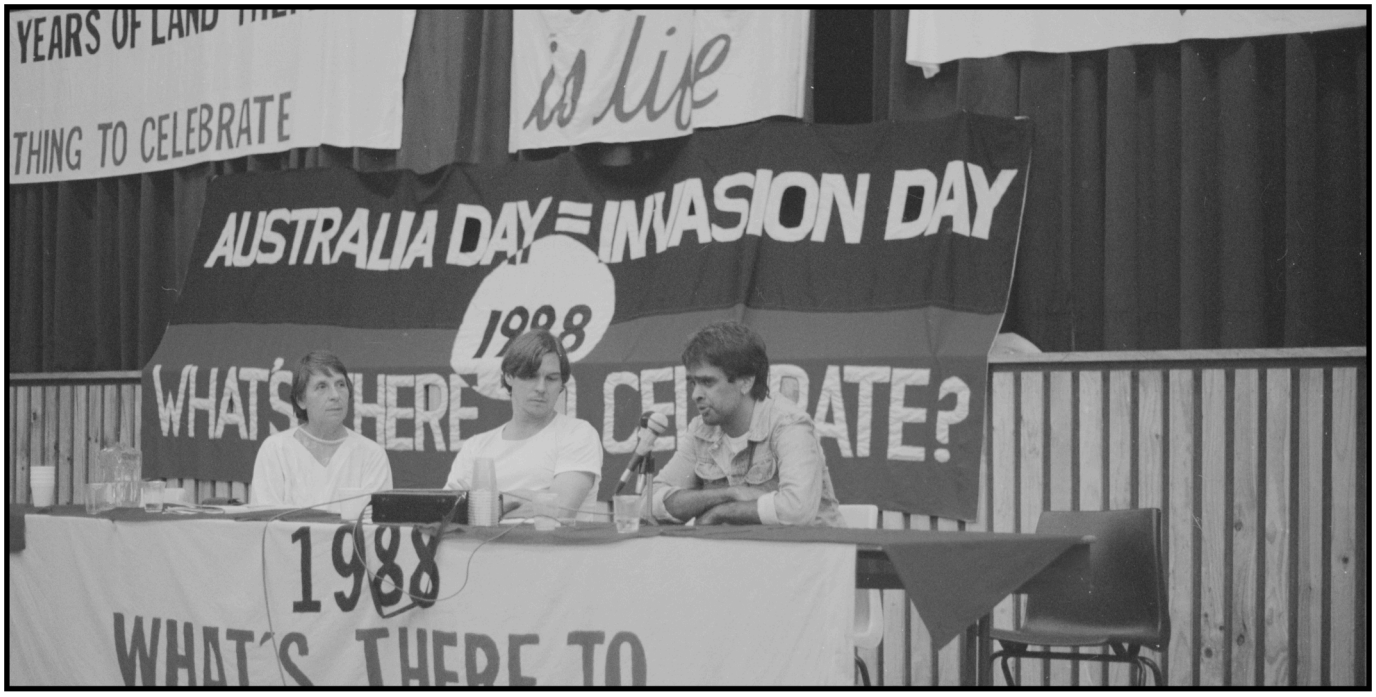
The RCO is not entirely immune to this treacherous cycle of development - to think so would be arrogant and unproven. However, we do attempt to do several things differently, in order to work towards an end to the sect form entirely. In the place of theoretical, ideological unity, we centre programmatic unity. We facilitate and promote factions developing surrounding this program and its content. We publicise debate, we argue and disagree, and we unite in action (a democratic centralism that remembers the "democratic" aspect). Perhaps most importantly (although impossible without the other aspects) we prioritise above all our own self-abolition; the formation of the communist party, the end to the dominance of sects, including the RCO.

This is our escape from the humiliation ritual of the sect lifecycle. This is our way out of the distorted, maimed, inept state of the Marxist Left

in Australia and (generally speaking) internationally. Without a party, we continue in limbo - the planet burns around us, workers die in droves, capital consumes itself, and we split, dissolve, reform, and split again into extinction.

The communist party is our first step to anything other than an endless stream of Red Sparks without a flame. The question that should be on every Marxist's lips is; how do we get there? The RCO thinks we have part of the answer - and perhaps so do you.

Our best wishes to Red Ant and Red Spark in their respective organisational journeys; our publication remains open, and our members remain enthusiastic, to debate, talk, and organise with you all.



For Aboriginal Sovereignty

Gary Foley

This article first appeared in 1988, published in Arena #83, 1988. It is based on a speech given by Gary Foley at a 1988 Rainbow Alliance conference held in Melbourne.

On 26 January 1988, Aboriginal Australia celebrated and gave a great show of solidarity, an expression of our ongoing sovereignty of this country. We've never relinquished the sovereignty of this country. I think it is important that people realise that it's not a question of coming and looking at the poor little old Aborigines and asking what you can do for us. I believe that we are in a position to teach you how to do the sort of things that I think you have come together to talk about at this conference.* I believe that Aboriginal Australia politically is in a very healthy position in terms of controlling our own affairs within our own community. We have an ongoing battle trying to get more resources to enable us to do the jobs that we want to do properly. But Aboriginal Australians have proven, especially in the last 20 years, that we are capable of solving our own problems if we've got control over the resources to do so.

An example is in the area of health care. Aboriginal people in the last 15 years in particular have built up a system of health care that is unique in the world. It is the only health care system that we know of which operates in accordance with the basic guidelines laid down by the World Health Organisation (WHO) for effective delivery of community health care. It is a revolutionary system for the simple reason that it's not the so-called professionals who run the system. It's not a system run by doctors or by people who have been to university and have letters after their names. It's a system that has been conceived, designed, established and is today controlled by the Aboriginal people themselves Aboriginal people from the communities in which these health services operate.

It began 15 years ago with an Aboriginal health service in Redfern, which had been set up by the Aboriginal community, and one in Fitzroy, Melbourne. Today, there are about 60 Aboriginal community-controlled health services throughout this country. As a group of organisations, they are represented nationally, politically, by their umbrella organisation which is the National

Aboriginal Islander Health Organisation (NAIHO). It is no accident that in the last 15 years both conservative Liberal governments and conservative Labor governments have done everything they possibly could to try and undermine that organisation. The simple reason is that the bureaucrats and the politicians have seen NAIHO for what it is - a threat to them and their power over Aboriginal people.

Too many Australians find it very difficult to accept that Aboriginal people are capable of controlling their own affairs; are capable of doing things better than your so-called white experts can. And as a result we are perceived NAIHO has been perceived as a threat, especially by the bureaucrats. For 15 years they've done everything possible to try and starve that organisation of resources when at the same time that organisation has done unbelievable things.

[Sydney Invasion Day march, 1988]

It has not only overcome immediate problems within the communities where it operates but has also strengthened politically and nationally the Aboriginal community.

Around 1980 the federal government allocation for Aboriginal health was about $20 million a year. Considering the appalling health problems confronted by the Aboriginal community it was chicken-shit money, but at the same time even the $20 million was denied Aboriginal health services. Sixteen million of that 20 million used to be handed straight over to the various state health bureaucracies around Australia, not one of which was involved in the delivery of primary health care. They were all running what they called preventive health programs which in reality simply meant that they employed a few token blackfellas to make their offices look good and black, and they made posters telling Aboriginal people to wash their hands after they go to the toilet. That was their preventive health program. They didn't take into account the fact that many Aboriginal communities at that time had no access even to running water to wash their bloody hands.

At the same time as those $16 million were going into totally inappropriate, totally pointless state health bureaucratic programs, NAIHO, representing at that time about 50 community controlled health services throughout this country, delivered an integrated primary health care and preventive health care program. According to the WHO this is the only way you can deliver effective health care. Those 50 community controlled health services, scattered all over Australia, were expected to operate with about two and a half million of the remaining $4 million.

And yet despite all the attempts to confine our operations, to control us, to deny us the resources needed to do the job properly, we still managed through sheer effort, through the incredible courage and determination of thousands of Aboriginal people. We managed not only to bring about identifiable improvements in the health of Aboriginal people where these health services were, but we also built a formidable national political organisation in the NAIHO: an organisation that in conjunction with other national Aboriginal organisations was able to extend the Aboriginal political movement into the international political arena to such an extent that the chickens are now well and truly coming home to roost for the Bob Hawkes and the politicians and the bureaucrats of Australia. There has never been the extent of international scrutiny of Australia that exists today, especially in this wonderful year of 1988, possibly the best year for Aborigines so far at least politically.

What was potentially a politically disastrous year for Aboriginal people has been transformed into a great success for us. The bicentennial seems to have fizzled out a little bit lately. Not too many people seem all that interested in it. But lots of people, both within Australia and overseas

especially, are vitally interested in what's happening in Aboriginal Australia.

Now you can go and set up Rainbow Alliances and whatever you like but it is important that you learn that we don't want you to come and say to us "what can we do to help you?' It's important that you look at the true history of our political struggle, especially in the last 20 years or so, and come to the realisation that we've got a lot to teach you about how to build a grass roots movement from the bottom up, not from the top down. I think if you look at the way in which the Aboriginal movement has organised itself, you will see that we didn't start off by a few hot-shots getting together and making decisions on behalf of the people at the bottom. It began from the bottom up, from the community out, identifying specific problems in a given community and then helping people gain knowledge and information about what was going on around them.

Information is power. And through people gaining information about what should happen or what shouldn't happen, or what their history is, and what's gone wrong, we're able to get our community organised. For example, when the Aboriginal Legal Service in New South Wales was first established it was something that came out of the Aboriginal community as a direct response by Aboriginal people to a specific major problem that existed in their community. And the NSW Aboriginal Legal Service became an extremely important organisation in the political history of the modern day Aboriginal political movement. It made an incredible contribution. It was one of the key organisations involved in the Aboriginal embassy.

People have to look honestly at their own history. I don't believe enough non-Aboriginal Australians know much about the reality of the Australian historical experience; about your history; about our history; about the two and where they connect. I think it is really important for people to learn that, and make other people aware; you must try in some way to come to terms with it and at least begin to understand and try to figure out how to overcome the incredibly entrenched racism that exists to this day in this society. Australia has such a long tradition of racism and there's not enough discussion of that. There aren't enough attempts to come to terms with that; to understand it; to try and remove the scourges of racism, sexism, and exploitation from the Australian community. You need to look inwards to start figuring out how to overcome that.

You've got to do all those things before you come to us and try and do anything with us. Learn from us. Aboriginal people are doing alright. Politically, we're doing brilliantly. There's a lot of room for improvement, but we have a strong united national political movement which not only attempts to bring about political change, but, parallel with that, is actually overcoming specific problems that confront our community. It's not something that's separate from helping people take control of their own lives. It's something that happens with people in conjunction with each other, not apart and separate.

If you look and learn from the Aboriginal experience you will see that Aboriginal people have tried to take control of their own affairs to exercise true self-determination. Ordinary Aboriginal people themselves have organised and contributed to the whole process. It's because Aboriginal people have organised themselves in such a way that I think is absolutely brilliant. There's no other group of people in this country who have gone from the position we were in 20 or 25 years ago to where we are today.

We are strong and united today. Any of you who marched on 26 January in Sydney can only have been overwhelmed in the same way I was by the unbelievable feeling of that day. And it was tremendous to see non- Aboriginal people marching with us and they got caught up in the spirit of the thing too.

We're strong, we're united and we're working on a multitude of levels, all of which ultimately form one great self-determination for Aboriginal people in this country: we must achieve economic independence for ourselves as communities of people. But if we achieve that in the next ten or 20 years, we will still be surrounded by an Australia that is in all aspects diametrically the opposite of our society. We'll end up as what amounts to socialist enclaves in the midst of a mad capitalist white Australia; a twisted white Australia.

The only sort of Australia that I think Aboriginal Australia can ultimately live alongside in true harmony is some form of socialist republic Australia where racism, sexism and exploitation have been eliminated. Now, we're doing alright in organising our mob. What the hell are you mob doing? You are so disorganised and splintered. It's vitally important that you get your act together, because whether we like it or not, we're all in this together.

The Socialist Left needs unity

Alyssa Duane

[Election posters for the Victorian Socialists, 2023.]

We (the organised Socialist Left) are not going to survive in the Australian political landscape. At least not by ourselves. The survival of the left is entirely dependent on its unification. As history and current international conflicts show us, even with unification the state will invest as much capital as it takes to destroy whichever groups oppose the local and global hegemony.

This process of decapitation becomes infinitely easier with the tiniest cracks that form between individuals within an organisation, its processes and more importantly, the movement as a whole. Decapitation becomes unnecessary, however, when these groups champion their own mutual destruction. We on the Australian left are guilty of tightening the noose on the necks of our comrades and then ourselves; For this we deserve to swing.

The RCO, CPA, Socialist Alliance and others to call themselves revolutionaries, but we are snivelling, name calling, cliches who focus too much on posturing and 'storm chasing' activism. This is a rat race with no end as the bourgeois capitalist class point and laugh or worse, completely ignore us. We embarrass ourselves in front of working Australians, confirm the stereotypes imposed on us by the right and disintegrate any notion of serious political legitimacy.

The three immediate aims for a modern communist party in this country are: establishing and maintaining political legitimacy, educating, disciplining and engaging the working class and everyday Australians, and fighting against the Australian capitalist state, exposing its crimes both at home and overseas, subsequently destroying the system and remaking it under a communist model. It is necessary that a party is formed to achieve this, and the best way to ensure that happens is to come together with a cross-left electoral ticket.

The present 'alternative'

The alternative to a cross-left electoral campaign is the current strategy of the Australian socialist movement - sparse individual groups of so-called revolutionaries, too concerned with themselves to advocate or incite meaningful change within our environments.

Collaboration is few and far between in this space. The Marxist Conference run by Socialist Alternative (SAlt) consistently has at least a thousand people attend each year. While SAlt is more than happy to have the occasional independent speaker host a panel, doing so is generally not open to other organisations on the left.

This actively avoids engaging with other Marxist ideas. Hosting panels that critique the politics of adjacent parties seemingly to further cement their members in their politics, ignores that the arguments which arise from cross-left conversations, would allow all parties and their membership to hone and critique their ideas, and think for themselves. This would strengthen the theoretical capabilities of the left and build connections between comrades, in turn strengthening our organising capacities and moving us closer to a party.

As it stands, other groups are not able to defend their position in any meaningful capacity without

purchasing tickets and attempting to argue their points, on the day, from the floor.

What's worse is the organisations that are being critiqued, are rarely named, instead choosing to attack their general political lines; the party question, Leninism, Maoism, etc.

While the Marxism Conference is guilty of this, it does not exist within a vacuum. During the same time of year, other political organisations hold their own conferences separately from each other. To have some of the biggest and most diverse socialist organisations in Australia conduct separate socialist conferences is a tragic indication of the state of our political organising. Conferences are for the exchange of ideas and the study of fields. If our field is Marxism, or the socialist movement in general, then we ought to hold conferences together for the joint study of socialist theory and strategy.

This self-centred and insecure style of political organising is displayed across most Australian organisations. What's worse is the more an organisation tends to grow in size the more suspicious they become of the 'other', and the more eager they are to criticise with no intention for being constructive or harbouring continuous dialectic debates. To what end? Why are we so quick to discard and suspect each other? Are we so afraid of each other that we do the bourgeois' job for them? Instead, we should throw ourselves into organising together, collaborating on and exploring the utility of a joint left ticket.

The Far Right Lesson

I would argue that we are, in our disarray, responsible for many of the ways in which bourgeois democracy has masterfully reoriented to convince the working class that when they can see capitalism failing around them, the only means they have to fight it are from within the system.

Between flat-earthers, global cabal 'truth' seers and god fearing nationalists, one might assume it would be impossible to find a more unstable foundation for a political platform. Yet, instead most of the working class will answer 'socialists'. Right wing extremism is unstable, desperate to consume the other in order to be saved, yet when the fascists win the only thing left to feed their insatiable appetites is themselves. Sound familiar?

Indeed, Trump's recent inauguration promises to bolster the global reactionary turn, including the impending Liberal landslide. Why are they so successful?

Because liberalism has failed them, there is no end of history. What was liberalism saving them from anyways? Good (white) nuclear families, a living wage, or was it the economy that acted

[Marxism Conference 2024, held by Socialist Alternative. Photo: Red Flag]

more like a playground than a safety net. We know these things came at the cost of millions of lives, slavery, constant political instability and imperialism. And, I believe the right knows that too. But they can see a bigger picture. They see a promised utopia of the past, which never existed. Right now, they all agree on the system they want to create, the system they believe they can exploit.

Similarly, the bourgeois class and bourgeois democracy (despite being in crisis) manage unity within the state, regardless of their constant divisions. Though they are inherently supported by the system, they too understand the fundamental rule of strength in unified force. When push comes to shove, Liberals and Reactionaries are served from the same working class, exploit the same countries and enjoy the same rewards. This truth has become more visible to the working class.

Data from the OECD Drivers of Public Trust

survey show that in 2023, 46% of Australians had high or moderately high trust in the national government. It also showed that political parties (34%) and news media (41%) are the least trusted institutions in Australia. Australians are clearly tired of the status quo, they understand that society is not working for, nor does it care about them.

Working Australians need principled unity in order to recognise a need to destroy the system, to go beyond reformism. They should feel empowered to act. They should have faith in socialists, not disinterest. We should not blame them, when we seem to not be able to simply engage with each other, our immediate and easiest task.

There seems to be an expectation among socialists, that it is only once the perfect organisation with the perfect ideological line and structure appears, that we can rally behind one banner and act. In doing this, we ignore the fundamental principles, practising and engaging in genuine debate and unity in work, that can lead us forward.

This kind of organisation will never exist and it shouldn't. But worse of all, this fantastical party could only be born from the freedom in debate and pursuit of continuous dialectic.

So not only will it never happen because this kind of party does not practice the politics that could give birth to that kind of organisation, but by the time its members come to this realisation, and accept imperfection, it will be too late. Such an organisation will have already reached the point of no return, collapsing or being decapitated by the state.

A joint Left electoral ticket will not only allow us to struggle and fight together, it will ensure the hardening of our cadre. With the open exploration and criticism that comes from arguing one's ideas, of being wrong and growing, adapting to the situation. This is what will make us strong, this is the tool we can use to practice and refine our politics. So that when the state intervenes, we will be sharp, quick and ready.

Conclusion

The time for true unity is now. Today we call for collaboration, we invite anyone and everyone who believes that capitalism must be destroyed within our lifetimes. We call for all organisations to join us in running for a cross-left electoral ticket. We can not make up for the mistake of time already lost, but we can, with earnest and dedication, have these conversations, foster these debates and fight for our political line. We can strengthen ourselves, our politics and grow the movement together.

We Need You!

Partisan reports on the Left and the social movements, but we need your help to do that.

We're looking for:

- Action reports
- Activist news
- Letters & communiques
- Statements
- Etc.

partisanmagazine@proton.me

Just Stop Oil activist released from prison

Submitted by Anonymous

Climate defender Rosa Hicks (29), alleged to have conspired on a Just Stop Oil Heathrow protest, was released on bail after being on remand for 6 months, due to broken heating in the women's court cells. She is carrying five bags of prison mail on a trolley. (Friday 24 January, 2025)

[Rosa Hicks is released from prison, Jan 2025. Photo: Just Stop Oil]

This is no comment on if the writer or the Partisan editorial board agrees with Just Stop Oil's politics or strategy - that is not the point, and there is no proof that Rosa agrees with JSO. The RCO is committed to ecological communism.

Rosa Hicks is an anarchist climate activist and care-worker who lived in WA for a few years. She moved back to the UK in 2023 and was arrested in July 2024 for an unproven allegation that she conspired on a non-violent Just Stop Oil protest at Heathrow Airport, making her part of the 'Heathrow 10'. Rosa denies all allegations and is pleading not-guilty. During her time in Australia, Rosa was good at tackling patriarchal, celebrity-culture and anti-worker biases in the Australian climate movement, and was a solid rank-and-file comrade. She flew east once or twice but was not a 'fly-in, fly-out' activist. I remember her practical Doc Marten sandals, an improvement on the boots that 'sand goths' in WA used to defy reality with.

Rosa was granted indefinite bail due to the court cells for women at Isleworth Crown Court being too cold. She was held in prison on remand for 6 months and was released due to failing infrastructure. Her male co-defenders are still held on remand. More worthy of a series finale to a UK comedy, this true fable demonstrates the farce that is the prison industrial complex. It raises class consciousness in observers for whom this might be their first brush with the capitalist ideological and repressive state apparatus (Althusser). There is a long way to go but comrades should rejoice in Rosa's six weeks of freedom, upon which her trial result will be decided, and she might be imprisoned for a maximum of ten years.

When Rosa went to pick up her letters, she had five bags of correspondence, in comparison to the usual one. This is not because Rosa is a 'celebrity': she is a regular person with no Wikipedia page (at the time of writing), who invested time in her community prior to going into prison, for its own sake. There is no guarantee you will get a lot of prison letters just from being an activist, a communist, an anarchist or from having a hardworking prison support team. We must be outgoing and consistent in our relationships while we can.

To write to all Just Stop Oil (19) and Palestine Action (16) prisoners, please email emailallprisoners@gmail.com.

To write to just the 16 Palestine Action prisoners, please email palactprisoners@protonmail.com.

You can also request post-prison contact information for those who have been released.

Just Stop Oil is a nonviolent civil resistance group in the UK. In 2022 we started taking action to demand the UK Government stop licensing all new oil, gas and coal projects. [Just Stop Oil website - About Us]

Have any news or quick reports for Partisan? Send them to our email: *partisanmagazine@proton.me*.

Communist unity talks in UK promising

Ruben Sol

[Logo of the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB)]

Recently there has been promising progress towards the unity of Partyist groups in the UK.

Comrades will likely be aware of Prometheus magazine's series of articles on the party question published following their return from inactivity in 2024 and merger with 'The Partyist' — a new partyist communist magazine (hence the name) founded in the same year. This series interrogated the need for a party in the UK, what type of party it should be and how such a party should be formed. This series brought submissions from a range of UK partyist groups and communists. It went beyond events held by the 'party time' series of discussions, which were more vaguely focused, concentrating and putting into dialogue various UK partyist groupings.

This led to a meeting on joint work being organized, initially pitched as for reading the Marxist Unity Group (MUG) reader. However, in this meeting between Talking About Socialism (TAS), the Communist Party of Great Britain Provisional Central Committee (CPGB-PCC), Prometheus Journal, Why Marx, and Revolutionary Socialism in the 21st Century (RS21), the prospect of unity talks was raised. At the time of writing, two discussions have taken place between the CPGB-PCC, TAS and Prometheus, with RS21 attending the first meeting as an observer. RS21, however, will not participate in the current unity talks due to being a relatively new group and not having a set position on the party form, meaning they did not have the same basis for unity as the other groups .

The rest of the parties, with the exception of Why Marx due to overlap with the other groups, have had two online sessions (set to be expanded to in person talks) with the eventual goal of a conference on a binding principle (according to Comrade Jack Conrad of the CPGB-PCC in the Weekly Worker), wherein all of the groups would be bound to uphold the democratic decisions. These regrouped and strengthened partyist forces would then have a strong foundation to advocate for wider socialist dialogue, regroupment, joint work, and eventually organisational unity. This process has two stages — unifying and strengthening of the partyist movement, then unifying the entire socialist movement.

However, there are still concrete issues to be resolved in these talks. In their statement on the talks, TAS lays out 6 points of discussion focusing on the internal structure of the future organisation, how it should deal with comrades who would undermine their project (such as those that support the imperialist war in Ukraine), and the strategy for the engagement with the wider movement. However, these seem promising, and the talks look likely to succeed given the interest and commitment of all current organisations involved and the later prospect of unity with RS21.

These unity talks are certainly an exciting development, being an application of the strategy of maximal unity of the socialist movement and the partyist strategy in the UK, where the situation of scattered left sects is similar to that in Australia. However, the immediate parties involved are a different matter.

In the UK, having many partyist groups of very

similar orientations, the prospect of organisational unity between these groups is a self-evident question. In Australia there is but a singular explicitly partyist formation, the Revolutionary Communist Organisation (RCO). Much of the socialist movement is found in the other sects, which follow a strategy of indefinite growth of their own grouping to the detriment of others, unifying in the revolutionary situation, where the spontaneous action of the workers will recognize their line as correct.

These sects can focus on various niches such as the student movement or various trade unions seeking to distinguish their politics and appeal from the other sects. Justifying their theoretical unity as maintaining their organisational cohesiveness, (and as a defence of their own reproducing leaderships) they are unwilling to agree to immediate unity. Likely they will only adopt partyist perspectives and embrace a unification process though the demonstration of programmatic unity, wider engagement with them and their publications, and the growing relevance (hopefully) of the RCO as an anti-sectarian sect.

Thus, from these unity talks we should pay attention not just to the basis and strategy of a unity conference, but also to the concrete perspectives for orienting to, and winning, the wider socialist movement to the communist party. While the RCO would likely willingly enter unification processes with any other partyist groups that emerge, or engage in significant mergers in which we would retain integral democratic rights and not be subordinated to state loyalists, we are not currently at this stage. These talks, their successes, failures, and lessons will hence be a lesson for the future, however immediate or distant it may be. For our comrades in the UK we hope that their unification progress can prove successful and that they carry forward the fight for a communist party with renewed vigour!

Acknowledgement: This article draws on Statements/ chronology from Jack Conrad, Why Marx and TAS, as well as statements of the Prometheus editorial board and the Weekly Worker.

The Communist Party of Great Britain is a revolutionary political organisation that fights to create in Britain a genuine mass Communist Party cohered around a genuine communist programme, and for communist leadership of the workers movement in Britain, Europe and internationally. Our goal is to overthrow capitalism and build a communist society free from the exploitation and oppression that characterise all class societies. [CPGB online - Who We Are]

[The Leninist, an early iteration of what would become The Weekly Worker, Issue 93 August 3 1990]

The Leninist

Issue 93 August 3 1990 50p

Supplement on the National Question

Poll Tax p2

NCP 'polemicises' p3

East Europe and the left pp4-5

Soviet CP congress p8

Euros call cops

Occupation of 16 St John Street to mark 70th anniversary of CPGB and expose Euro treachery

THE FORMATION of the Communist Party of Great Britain, on July 31 1920, was the greatest achievement of the working class in our country. With it, the working class is everything; without it, nothing. Only with a Communist Party can the working class go from being a slave class under capitalism to the class that will build socialism and liberate humanity.

Given its aims, given that it organised the best, most advanced,

ing its cue from counterrevolutionary Gorbachevism in the USSR, the Euro organisation – which illegitimately uses the name CPGB – now joins with the bourgeoisie in its triumphalist campaign of slander against socialism. With one voice they claim that the crisis and ignomi-

the only future worthy of human beings.

Today the process of political liquidation by the Euros has reached a qualitatively new stage: organisational liquidation. In its 70th anniversary year, the Euro leaders are selling off (privatising) the Party's collective property to

porters (who were given Dutch courage by being tanked up on beer and gin), Euro functionaries Ian MacKay and Martin Jacques formally threatened, in the presence of a large police squad, to stage a violent incident. Although our comrades made it perfectly

violent revolution, proletarian internationalism and soviet democracy.

The Euros are diametrically opposed to these communist principles in theory and practice; they openly embrace pro-capitalist liberalism and use the enemy's state machine against opponents. They have a right to think what they like. What they do not have a right to do is to sell off assets accumulated *purely* on the self sacrifice of

Freedom to criticise and unity of action

V. I. Lenin

The editors have received the following communication, signed by the Central Committee of the R.S.D.L.P.

"In view of the fact that several Party organisations have raised the question of the limits within which the decisions of Party congresses may be criticised, the Central Committee, bearing in mind that the interests of the Russian proletariat have always demanded the greatest possible unity in the tactics of the R.S.D.L.P., and that this unity in the political activities of the various sections of our Party is now more necessary than ever, is of the opinion:

(1) that in the Party press and at Party meetings, everybody must be allowed full freedom to express his personal opinions and to advocate his individual views;

(2) that at public political meetings members of the Party should refrain from conducting agitation that runs counter to congress decisions;

(3) that no Party member should at such meetings call for action that runs counter to congress decisions, or propose resolutions that are out of harmony with congress decisions." (All italics ours.)

In examining the substance of this resolution, we see a number of queer points. The resolution says that "at Party meetings" "full freedom" is to be allowed for the expression of personal opinions and for criticism (§ 1), but at "public meetings" (§ 2) "no Party member should call for action that runs counter to congress decisions". But see what comes of this: at Party meetings, members of the Party have the right to call for action that runs counter to congress decisions; but at public meetings they are not "allowed" full freedom to "express personal opinions"!!

Those who drafted the resolution have a totally wrong conception of the relationship between freedom to criticise within the Party and the Party's unity of action. Criticism within the limits of the principles of the Party Programme must be quite free (we remind the reader of what Plekhanov said on this subject at the Second Congress of the R.S.D.L.P.), not only at Party meetings, but also at public meetings. Such criticism, or such "agitation" (for criticism is inseparable from agitation) cannot be prohibited. The Party's political action must be united. No "calls" that violate the unity of definite actions can be tolerated either at public meetings, or at Party meetings, or in the Party press.

Obviously, the Central Committee has defined freedom to criticise inaccurately and too narrowly, and unity of action inaccurately and too broadly. Let us take an example. The Congress decided that the Party should take part in the Duma elections. Taking part in elections is a very definite action. During the elections (as in Baku today, for example), no member of the Party anywhere has any right 'whatever to call upon the people to abstain from voting; nor can "criticism" of the decision to take part in the elections be tolerated during this period, for it would in fact jeopardise success in the election campaign. Before elections have been announced, however, Party members everywhere have a perfect right to criticise the decision to take part in elections. Of course, the application of this principle in practice will sometimes give rise to disputes and misunderstandings; but only on the basis of this principle can all disputes and all misunderstandings be settled honourably for the Party. The resolution of the Central Committee, however, creates an impossible situation.

The Central Committee's resolution is essentially wrong and runs counter to the Party Rules. The principle of democratic centralism and autonomy for local Party organisations implies universal and full freedom to criticise, so long as this does not disturb the unity of a definite action; it rules out all criticism which disrupts or makes difficult the unity of an action decided on by the Party.

We think that the Central Committee has made a big mistake by publishing a resolution on this important question without first having it discussed in the Party press and by Party organisations; such a discussion would have helped it to avoid the mistakes we have indicated.

We call upon all Party organisations to discuss this resolution of the Central Committee now, and to express a definite opinion on it.

Partisan goes to the cinemas: Nosferatu (2024)

August Jenkins

[Willem Dafoe's Prof. Albin Franz revels in the burning of Orlok's profane residence in Nosferatu (2024). Photo: IMDB]

Late 2024 blessed us with Robert Eggers's (of The Lighthouse and The Vvitch fame) adaption of the 1922 classic Nosferatu, though Australians did not get to see it until this month (Jan 2025). It is a 'gothic horror' revival taking us back to the good old days of ugly vampires living in coffins in Eastern Europe. Maybe we will finally get a[nother] World of Darkness adaptation after this. No holds are barred in Nosferatu as even the children fall victim to Count Orlok's satanic mysticism.

It is trite these days to point out that vampires are a metaphor for something. Or more like an allegory. In Nosferatu, Orlok (Bill Skarsgard) is a literal personification of feudalism, slumbering in his ancient castle feasting on the blood and flesh of antique village people. Spending years grooming Ellen Hutter (Lily-Rose Depp) into being his lover, he springs his plan to wage a campaign of psycho-sexual revenge against modernity and to claim Ellen as his sexual property.

Nosferatu is a dark film, in that darkness constantly envelops the setting. As Thomas Hutter approaches Orlok's carpathian castle, he must travel through a dark, ominous forest. Orlok's castle, as one would expect, devoid of any light. It is a non-naturalist film, which is more or less in line with Robert Eggers's style (see: The Lighthouse, 2019). In a sense, Nosferatu is a Protestant counterpart to The Exorcist (1973): a young woman is possessed by a demon (Ellen is possessed and is often a proxy of Orlok's magic) which must be expelled from her by a rationalist sceptic (Nicholas Hoult's Thomas Hutter) paired with an eccentric crank who asserts a realm beyond material science (Willem Dafoe's Prof. Albin Franz). Superficially, Ellen Hutter's possession by Orlok resembles Regan MacNiel's possession by the demon Pazuzu.

Eggers's pattern of psycho-sexual references continues in Nosferatu, where Thomas Hutter is cuckholded by Orlok who is in turn cuckholded by Thomas. Orlok's sexuality pervades the film, and ultimately he is slain by his own lust turned against him by Ellen. Friedrich Harding dies in a fit of mania while having strange, necrophilic sex with his recently dead wife. When Orlok sucks the blood from the chest of his victims, his nude body writhes on top of them skin-to-skin. Orlok is sexually perverse vampire.

Nosferatu is a rare(ish) film for the 2020s: it is a competently made film with a modest budget (only USD$50M). While Nosferatu is not an original film (it is an adaptation of the 1922 Nosferatu film which itself is an adaptation of Bram Stroker's Dracula turned knockoff), it nonetheless stands out in a line up of glitzy sequels (Indiana Jones and the Dial of Destiny, 2023), licensed tie-ins, and streaming originals with inflated budgets (see: Red One, dir. Jake Kasdan).

Nosferatu is an eccentric, harrowing film which is a breath of fresh air for a decade of otherwise mediocre releases.

Letters

The Non-Sectarian Sect

New Shanty Sharehouse, Sydney

The Revolutionary Communist Organisation needs to engage with the paradox of being a non-sectarian sect. Every couple of years, a group or individual arises in Australia who is 'going to unite the left'. Who sets out saying 'I want my group to be small and not get along with people'? or 'I'd really like the left to be a patchwork quilt of factions that means I'm either delivering or hearing the same joke about the People's Front of Judea and the Judean People's Front once every Rising Tide mobilisation'?

It is impressive that the RCO is said to contain factions spanning from Anarchists to Stalinists, and that they get along well enough in a shared project. However, if you want to grow the left's base, it's important to question what non-sectarianism and solidarity actually looks like, and whether leading your paper with so many critiques is helping that. Capitalism instills a scarcity mindset in all of us. If someone is doing 'their' project, they're not doing 'my' project. If you flip this mindset and recognise the shared struggle refracted through innumerable organisations, cultures and projects, suddenly we are surrounded by allies, accomplices and comrades mounting resistance in ways we never imagined, towards liberation and justice.

Everybody wants to unite the left, but too many of us do this by saying 'stop doing your thing and do my thing'. This is a poor basis for imagining not just shared futures, but also collectivism, collaboration and solidarity in the present. Further, as our contexts evolve and the circumstances of resistance change, we must maintain the ability to change and grow. This collective political development is best when differing people, ideas and values come together in solidarity. It is that diversity that we can draw from to build, adapt and resist.

So the question we pose to the editors and your readers is this: what set of values, ideas and practices can we foster that enable us to work together given we will never (and nor should we) always agree? And how can people work with you if they agree with parts of the RCO program, and disagree with or are unsure about others? We know you've been making minizines so that might be a good format to address these questions.

Chris Cutrone's Conservative Contrarianism

Francis Q, Email

Chris Cutrone of the Platypus Affiliated Society recently published an essay for the "post-liberal" magazine compact in which he defended Trump's expansionary rhetoric calling for the annexation of regions like Canada, Greenland and the Panama.

To put it bluntly this essay, and its defenders, are, at best, extremely fucking stupid. That may seem harsh. Thankfully I can justify this position. The first and most straightforward piece of evidence that this is extremely fucking stupid is that the article gets several things simply wrong.

For example:

- Cutrone claims that "Canada, then, remains the frontier of the counterrevolution after both American revolutionary wars"

- That Trump calling for "Making Greenland and Canada American is part of this initiative. Trump declared the Gulf of Mexico to be the Gulf of America" and that "This is not imperialism, but a reminder of the Empire of Liberty that Thomas Jefferson declared the mission of the new United States. It is an evergreen promise. America is revolutionary or it is nothing."

- That "all of America's opponents ... have been and remain slave states."

- That "the United States does not desire to rule but only to free people and places"

- That Xi Jingping's refusal to go to Trump's inauguration was because he did not want to be "reminded of the vitality of American democracy"

- That Trump "represents the 'hope and change' that was merely a marketing slogan for Obama before him. "

- That Trump "Trump's character, which is bombastic but not empty. Where others have been complacent to let spaces lie unutilized, he has set to building."

To me these statements are self-evidently bullshit, narratives on par with that put out by Praeger University videos. Given that Cutrone gives no evidence for these claims, I will. How exactly did the existence of Canada pervert the socialist revolutions in the 20th century? Why does some rhetoric of some long dead slaveholder mean that a nation is inherently

revolutionary? How do you square the United States' desire to free people and places with the legacy of support for conquest and dictates going all the way back to the Philippine-American war? Should we expect anything from a man who's entire business career is full of fuckup after fuckup, including a failure to make money while running a casino?

Maybe Cutrone has serious answers for all these basic rejoinders. But all that Cutrone provides is conjecture.

The next piece of evidence that this is extremely fucking stupid are the defences raised by supports of Cutrone. Most notable of these is Douglas Lain of Sublation Media wherein he argues that Cutrone is actually being provocative in asking such questions because we need to consider whether or not socialism in the United States would be better served by an American controlled Greenland and that we need to find the "rational kernel in his provocation".

Wondering whether the socialist movement in the United States would be better positioned in a world where America controlled Greenland is akin to wondering what you'll eat in a month when your house is currently burning down. Sure it's a question that might be useful to ask at some point. But right now, you have much bigger things to worry about. Particularly given that Lain and Cutrone have been long time critics of the mess that is American socialism.

Such excuses are especially obnoxious because the language that Cutrone uses in his article is not aimed at the left at all. I've already cited a bunch of the rhetoric that Cutrone uses and its indistinguishable from conservatives justifying imperialism.

Even if this is 4d chess designed to get the left to really think about how annexing Greenland would be "good for socialism", how you present yourself matters. Writing an article that is indistinguishable from some right wing imperialist pablum, publishing it in a right wing journal and then expecting people to not call you right wing is the sort of obnoxious trolling you expect from teenagers, not someone who calls themselves "The Last Marxist". Effectively communicating with people means doing the work of speaking in a way that people are receptive to. Acting like you made some sort of point when people call you stupid for not clearly stating your point might win you points with people who've already brought into your position, but you aren't going to convince anyone outside of your cult.

Sometimes there's no hidden hidden wisdom in a text, no key insight into understanding capitalism or Trump or the left or the world. Sometimes a public intellectual is just kinda fucking stupid. It's okay to admit that.

One last thing about Mangione and the Left

Max J, Newcastle

Luigi Mangione (may or may not have) shot United Healthcare CEO Brian Thompson on December 4th, and far from changing the world or sparking the revolution as some may believe, nothing happened. Marxists have long repudiated individual terror as a tactic of revolution (although, Mangione is not a communist, anarchist, leftist etc, despite people projecting these politics onto him), or at least should be, so it comes as a surprise that in the aftermath of Mangione's nihilistic and mindless attack on the system, people claiming to be communists and Marxists not only support what Mangione did, but also encourage copy-cat shooters.

I did not care that Thompson was shot dead. The private healthcare industry in the US (and everywhere, really) is the vanguard of social murder, and many have made their stories and interactions with this system public (about the only 'positive' thing to come from this shooting). However, this shooting represents political trends that many people are ignoring, condoning, or outright supporting.

That this shooting was done by a 'random guy' and not by a politically committed terrorist is indicative of one thing: that 'random guys' are slowly finding their way toward individual terrorism even if they lack the political background. Unlike the average individual terrorist in the US, Mangione was not some basement dwelling incel ('involuntarily celibate', misogynist internet subculture) or avowed neo-Nazi (though some of his alleged political inspirations raise eyebrows). Secondly, this shooting indicates a startling trend in the post-Bernie, post-2016 U.S Left – a trend toward nihilistic violence and terrorism, once relegated to edgy guillotine memes on Twitter. Even long-time activist Tom Tanuki has joined in on the "shoot CEOs" bandwagon that the terminally online Left has found itself chugging along to.

Instead of engaging politically, whether they can or are 'barred' from doing so (perceived or otherwise), these people turn to random acts of violence (a similar tendency could be seen with Aaron Bushnell and others – instead of directing their violence against specific targets, they

directed it against themselves in frivolous acts of suicidal moralism). Justified with ultra-left verbiage, these people wreck and sabotage the movement to build a militant workers party by encouraging workers to throw their lives away for the cheap catharsis that comes from killing someone you don't like. Worst of all, the majority of these people are full of hot air, more or less: their advocacy for and encouragement of terrorism begins at the keyboard and ends at the enter key. For all the talk of "class war", "class consciousness", and the "necessity" of killing billionaires, none of these people follow through on their ill-advised threats (for the better).

I'm far from a fan of CEOs, but rather controversially, I believe that murdering CEOs and billionaires will not end the capitalist system. It is nihilistic catharsis seeking from people who have 'given up' on real politics. As Martin Greenfield wrote for the Weekly Worker:

"The working class has no interest in private health schemes, but in a completely socialised health system that removes private insurance altogether. This will not be achieved by the murder of insurance executives. It would be concerning for the 'progressive' movements – either environmental or anti-capitalist – to see these individual acts as a path forward. While they might grab momentary sympathy and be seen as some sort of 'Robin Hood moment', they are in fact dangerous and reactionary dead-ends for the workers' movement." (WW1519)

Leftists of all stripes will, I don't doubt, continue to valorize and defend Luigi Mangione, completely detached from the more or less apathetic shrugging of the working class. One does not have to look far to find a leftist drooling over how "hot" Luigi looks, worshipping him as a saint, turning the shooting into merchandise, or making infographics about how his perp walk made him look "cool". Frothing over how attractive Mangione is and putting his face on underwear misses the point of what he did completely – if we take him at his word (or by his deed), the point was to lash out against a murderous institution of capital, not to show everyone his chiselled jawline.

As Martin pointed out for the WW, even Jordan van den Lamb (aka 'purplepingers' of Tiktok fame), has fallen into the trap of lefty meme subculture, especially with regards to Mangione. While van den Lamb can assert til he's blue in the face that he's against individual terror and for collective action (as he does in a bleak 14-minute video uploaded to Twitter/X), posting memes about Mangione which softens people to him and his act, while not outright opposing this act of individual terror (which Trotsky, cited in van den Lamb's video, does), easily gives one the impression, whether intended or otherwise, that van den Lamb has little to no issue with such acts.

In a Tweet made shortly after the shooting, he also states that "system you're speaking about here is enabled by powerful people with names and addresses" [@purplepingers]. What is the implication of this statement meant to be, paired with a supportive attitude toward Mangione, except that the system can be disabled by shooting said powerful people with names and addresses? An earlier tweet, in which he states that "I feel like sometimes people like this [millionaires, CEOs, etc] forget they have names and addresses" [@purplepingers], does not do him any favors.

One does not need to look very hard to find instances of van den Lamb posting memes supportive of or covering for Mangione, which makes it hard to believe him when he states that he is 'against' individual terror: either he is being a hypocrite (he is saying one thing but doing another), or he is too immersed in lefty meme subculture to understand that terrorism isn't a joke to be shared around on social media profiles with your face and name attached.

Jordan should use his head and think about the things he posts, not only because he is a public figure identified with socialist politics, but also because he is a candidate for the Victorian Socialists. If I can put all of this into a letter without much effort and criticize him for it, professional newsrooms will tear him open if they ever thought to do so (as of publication, he has been attacked by The Australian for this exact conduct). By conducting himself in a frankly undisciplined way, he is opening himself, the Victorian Socialists, the socialist movement, and the workers movement up to cheap attacks from the bourgeois press, which is easy to do when van den Lamb provides a non-stop supply of figurative weaponry to attack him with.

We should expect better political discipline from our electoral candidates, especially when it comes to events such as the CEO shooting (and potential future ones). I won't say that Jordan is totally useless, or that his purplepingers project has no value. It has certainly spread useful information about renters rights, squatters rights, the housing crisis, etc. However, this does not make him a suitable candidate for the

Victorian Socialists (on its own). Thus it is still confusing how van den Lamb managed to be selected for the spot in the first place.

We should be organising workers, not telling them to shoot people they don't like. We can have one or the other. At the risk of exonerating Platypus, if the best the Left can provide the working class is tiktok after tiktok about how Luigi Mangione looks like a model and should be made a saint (are we catholics, or communists?), then we can safely say that Mangione's shooting well and truly proves the death of the Left.

Deny, defend, depose? Assassinations and Workers Power

Sylvia Ruhl, Brisbane

The assassination of UnitedHealthcare CEO Brian Thompson was immediately met with praise and jubilation the world over. Bullet casings left behind were engraved with the words "Deny", "Defend", and "Depose"; a reference to the tactics of health insurance firms in denying patients claims, left no room for doubt that this was a retaliation for these practices that have killed, frankly, an unknowable number of people.

As of the time of writing over a week on, it is still not possible to avoid coming across some on social media who assert that this masterfully executed attack has to some extent alleviated America's healthcare crisis. While in the immediate aftermath one insurance company or another may have reversed some decision to reduce their customers' coverage, this assassination was ultimately pointless. The weapon of the proletariat and the means that will bring it to rule is its democratic outlook, and its status as a heterogeneous, mobile, and disciplined class. To attack individual capitalists in the words of Trotsky, "belittles the role of the masses" by reducing the agent of revolution to a gun in the hand of the rogue.

Revolution has not come any nearer because of this attack, Thompson was immediately replaced, and UnitedHealthcare continues to gouge millions of sick and dying Americans. The only change that will outlast this initial excitement is a tightening of police repression on the working class. The assassin has only succeeded in turning himself into a folk hero.

The question from here is what way forward? To address the most immediate point, any campaign to free Luigi Mangione, be he innocent or guilty, should be supported by all radicals. While assassinations are not a tactic we should endorse, his actions are clearly an impassioned response to the social murder perpetuated by health insurance firms. This is how Communists should characterise the nature of the assassination, in addition to it being the futile praxis of an individualised, and non-organised actor.

Secondly, and more importantly, we need to continue the long, hard work of organising and raising the consciousness of workers in the healthcare and insurance industries. The strongest tool of the working class is its ability to stop production, and we need to find out how to make use of this industry-wide to put forward demands calling for the introduction of universal healthcare, and for the nationalisation of the insurance industry and privately-run hospitals and clinics.

The scope of this campaign must also expand towards global proletarian liberation, such as through carrying out industrial action in response to corporate attacks on countries in the Global South that illegally produce patented medication (should they eventually choose to do so). What also needs to be figured out through debate and critique is how the infrastructure and workforce of the health insurance industry can be re-oriented from hindering healthcare access, to facilitating it.

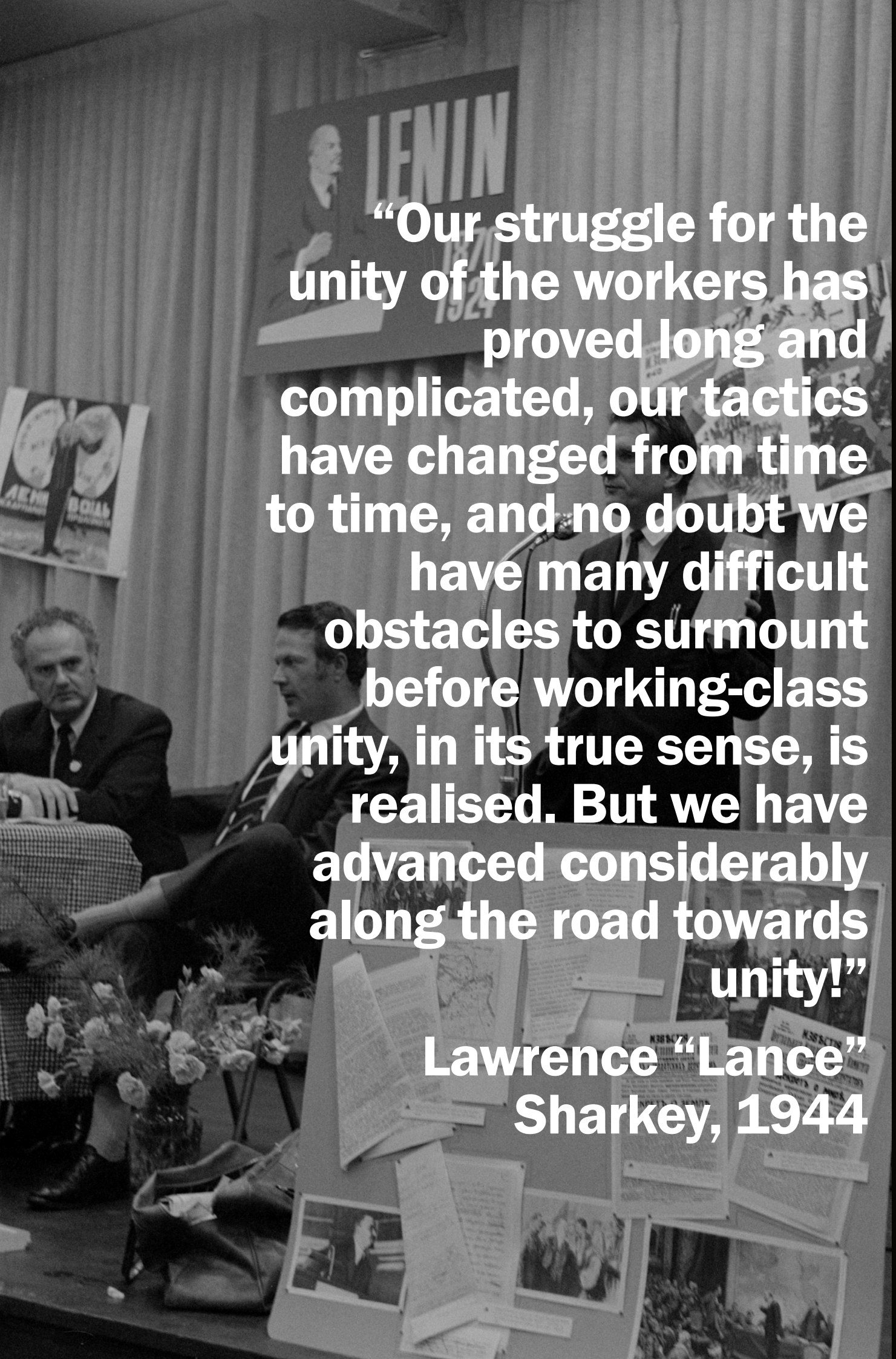
Struggling for these demands will invite unabated opposition from whole sections of the bourgeoisie that can only be overcome by an all-working class movement. Lone-actor heroes will never stop the plunder by insurance firms. If we want to fight disease and fight capitalism, we need to fight together.

Write us a letter!

Writing us a letter is easy, and is a good alternative to writing a full article or essay. Letters are submitted like normal articles are, through our email.

A letter could be any kind of statement or observation, in around 500 words or less. The shorter the better. In a letter, you should give your opinion or statement on something, then finish off with your name and city (any name works - many of our writers use pseudonyms).

Letters should be sent to partisanmagazine@proton.me and contain the subject "Letter: [heading]". The content of your letter can be sent within the body of the email as opposed to a document attached to the email.



“Our struggle for the unity of the workers has proved long and complicated, our tactics have changed from time to time, and no doubt we have many difficult obstacles to surmount before working-class unity, in its true sense, is realised. But we have advanced considerably along the road towards unity!”

Lawrence “Lance” Sharkey, 1944